1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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recognized over 100 chiefdoms, mustering anything from 100 to 3,000 adult men apiece.

Although no centralized political authority existed before the German occupation, certain groups of chiefdoms joined in common rituals directed to common ancestors. We traced four such centres of worship among the Nyakyusa; the most important being Lubaga, in the middle of the valley, where Kinga priests (from the top of the Livingstone mountains) join with many Nyakyusa chiefdoms in sacrifice to Lwembe, who is claimed as the ancestor both of the chiefs of the Nyakyusa proper, and of the Kinga. At LiKyala, on the Lake-shore plain, Kinga also join in sacrifice with the surrounding Nyakyusa chiefdoms. In Ngonde the chief connected with a similar centre of worship, Mbande, developed far-reaching secular as well as religious powers; and by the time the Europeans arrived he was established as a paramount chief with the title of the Kyungu. This development was directly connected with the fact that Ngonde traded with the outside world, and that their Kyungu, through his control of ivory, was able also to control the guns and cloth which came into the country:[1] the Nyakyusa, remaining isolated, remained politically disunited.

Besides sacrificing to a distant ancestor in company with the representatives of a large group of chiefdoms, two or more chiefs who are neighbours participate in a sacrifice at the grove in which their common father, or grandfather, is buried. Thus common worship links both large groups of chiefdoms, whose chiefs are more or less distantly related, and small groups of contiguous chiefdoms whose chiefs are close kinsmen. The sacrifices made are to the chiefs of immediately preceding generations, and to certain great heroes of the distant past, such as Lwembe and Kyala.

All these sacrifices are believed to bring rain and fertility, for the well-being of each chiefdom is thought to be bound up with the health of the chief and the goodwill of his ancestors.

The Nyakyusa are all agreed that their chiefs, *abanyafyale*, are 'strangers' who came down from the Livingstone mountains eight or ten generations ago, and found the valley already occupied by people who had no knowledge of fire, but ate their food raw. The chiefs brought fire with them—some say, cattle also;

[1] Godfrey Wilson, op. cit., pp. 9, 39–48.

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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objection to marrying the child of one who has been convicted is clearly not pushed to its logical conclusion. No slur is cast on any one lineage when an individual is convicted of witchcraft, for he may have inherited it from either parent, or even got it from a friend; conversely no lineage is cleared by an autopsy, for not all the children of a witch are necessarily witches. Thus a man may have a father or brother or son who is 'pure', yet be a witch himself. As we have seen, even persons belonging to the same lineage may occasionally accuse each other. Nevertheless, when an individual who is reputed to be a witch dies, the close relatives do sometimes insist on an autopsy, in order to clear the deceased of suspicion, and possibly themselves also (*vide supra*, p. 117). In one case we recorded it was a daughter who insisted on the autopsy being performed on her mother, a reputed witch. No witchcraft was found.

So far we have dealt with cases of misfortune befalling an individual, followed by action against a fellow villager who is suspected of being responsible. This type of case is far the commonest within the field of witchcraft. When a general misfortune, such as a plague or epidemic, threatens, the chiefdom acts as a whole, not the villages separately, and the ritual is directed primarily to securing the blessing of the shades. There is some suggestion of ridding the chiefdom of witchcraft at the same time, but the emphasis is on appeasing the ancestors. The traditional new year cleansing (*ukutag' ikikungu*), now rarely performed, was also the concern of chiefdoms not separate villages, and it involved prayer to the ancestors.

b. The age-village and the ancestors

We have dwelt at length on witchcraft and 'the breath of men', for, in Nyakyusa belief, the defence of the village against witches and the punishment of wrong-doers by 'the breath' of their fellows is the main corporate activity of the village in the religious sphere. There are no village rituals directed to the ancestors comparable to those performed on behalf of lineages and chiefdoms. Indeed, belief in the power of shades operates only in situations where social position is determined by descent, as it is in lineages and in the succession to chieftainship. The office of village headman is not hereditary. The son of a village headman

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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cannot be appointed as headman in any village of his own generation, and villages of past generations disappear. When a headman dies, his village still being in existence, his place is taken by his heir who may be a son, but this office is only temporary. The village ceases to exist when its original members die off. Moreover, there is no suggestion that the shade of a headman's father broods over the village as the shade of a chief is thought to brood over the land he ruled.

The Nyakyusa have a lively belief in the power of shades, a belief closely connected with the dependence of the members of a lineage upon one another for cattle,[1] and with the office of 'divine king', but such belief scarcely affects village relationships, for the shades are not thought to be concerned with behaviour between neighbours, as distinct from relatives.

It is true that the proper performance of family rituals includes feasting neighbours, but the implication always is that the shades are concerned only in enforcing obligations towards themselves and fellow kinsmen, not towards non-relatives. On the other hand, neighbours are concerned in the enforcement of kinship obligations. When a son insults his father, the father's neighbours are insulted also; when a daughter-in-law peeps at her father-in-law the shocked astonishment of the neighbours may cause her children to pine. And so, when an erring son begs pardon of his father, he must provide a feast for the neighbours, 'that they may see that his father is satisfied'.

A situation often arises in which both the shades and 'the breath of men' operate, sometimes 'the breath' of shocked neighbours supporting the shades, and sometimes shades and men each exacting their due. One illustration of this was given us by Kalunda: 'If you do not carry out the burial rites for your father, people are angry, they throttle you, and the shade is angry also, he comes on your body. No, the witches do not call the ancestors to help; both are angry on their own account. To-day the black ones, the witches, come and throttle you; to-morrow the ancestors come. People are angry because they do not eat meat; the shade is angry because you did not perform the burial rites for him. He says: "See, I left much property, why did you not bury me properly?" ' And in discussing the obligation of a daughter-in-

[1] cf. Godfrey Wilson, 'An African Morality', *Africa*, Vol. IX (1936); Monica Wilson, 'Nyakyusa Kinship' in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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admit their anger, and prefer to blame the shades and conciliate the neighbours by feasting. For example:

> When someone is ill of a curse the owners of the village do not agree that it is they who have bewitched him. No, that is what others say. . . . When they bless such a person they pray to the shades. As, for example, with M. [informant's father, a wealthy man]. If he falls ill with a disease of the legs, and goes to a diviner, and the diviner says: 'They have bewitched you,' then he goes home and seeks a bull and calls the men of the village, saying: 'Let us enjoy ourselves with this bull.' They say: 'Is it the legs?' He denies it, saying: 'No, I am just giving you something to eat, something with which to enjoy ourselves.' They say: 'Are you a chief to feast us on a bull?' He says: 'I just thought I would like to enjoy myself with you.' He conceals the cause because if he speaks of the illness they will say: 'Ha, he is catching us for witchcraft.' They eat, and at the beer they say: 'You, M., take this stick and stand up. Walk!' And when they go home each prays to his shades, saying: 'Stand by him, may he recover from his sickness!'

In short, the Nyakyusa speak of the danger of angering senior relatives, but they attribute most of their misfortunes to their neighbours, and they say that more misfortunes are due to neighbours and fewer to the shades than is openly admitted!

Perhaps the most striking feature of the family cult among the Nyakyusa is the narrowness of its range. Neighbours are concerned with the fulfilment of family obligations as well as obligations to themselves, but the shades are concerned solely with behaviour between kinsmen. 'If I wrong a kinsman I fear the shades, but not if I wrong another.'

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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241 stretched across the garden, and presently the pigs clear off, and there is silence again. Many kinds of game get part at least of their living out of human industry, and have to be laboriously guarded against.

For smaller pests additional aid must be sought. Field mice and rats, *indafu*, a small locust-like creature, grubs, wireworms, and moles, work great injury, and ordinary methods of dealing with them are vain. Take, at sunset, a brand from the fire, and walk over the garden with it, singing "*Kuki Kyaubili?*" Where is the Unseen God? and the pests will clear out.

241 622 769 The first maize cobs are taken to the chief; then each head of a family presents a few cobs to his own ancestors; twins also must be presented with early cobs, and it is only then that common people are safe if they begin to eat the new season's crops. When the chief makes an offering to his ancestors, it is usually laid at the *lupando*, the place where the village trees stand. The maize is eaten by mice, but it is credited to the "lion" which is the chief's guardian (Chap. V). In some districts a perhaps more primitive ceremony is observed. With a following of little children, the doctor goes to the grave of the chief's ancestors, and there roasts a few maize cobs, which he divides among the children; on their return, intimation is made that all may now eat the new crops.

251 The food stocks in the barns are protected by a medicine, but this practice is falling out of use, though many still follow it. If a man is too poor to buy the medicine, he begs a handful of the protected grain from his better-off neighbour, confident t[illegible]he

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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CHAPTER XV

The Ancestral Spirits

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THE importance of the spirits in the every-day life of the Konde can hardly be over-estimated. From the day that the month-old infant is presented by the head of the family to the spirits of its ancestors—though this ceremony is dying out at Karonga—until the day of death, when the spirit is directed to go in peace and confidence to meet his forefathers, living and dead are mingled in one stream of life, form one community, and are dependent upon each other for many of the best things "above" on earth here, and "below" where the spirits are. Yet it is by no means easy to define the relation of the living man to the spirits of his fathers who are ever about him. It is, perhaps with more facility than the facts warrant, usually defined as an attitude of worship; but there are at least indications that the attitude is incompletely expressed by the idea of worship.

Sacrifices, or offerings, are made to the spirits; and this, it need not be doubted, is an act of worship. The word used is *ukwikemesya*, which is used by British and German missionaries to denote an act of worship offered to God. On the other hand, the

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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food, beer, and other things placed at the graves, are intended to maintain in some way the life of the spirits, to keep them in countenance in their own world. For as men are dependent on the goodwill of the spirits for the best things of life, so do the spirits depend upon their descendants on earth for much of what they require in the other world.

The dead are conceived as obtaining a great access of power on passing into the spirit world, power for good or evil, and to placate them is one of the chief preoccupations of Konde life. But while it would not be true to say that compulsion can be brought to bear upon the spirits, that once the appropriate ceremonies are performed, the spirit must fulfil the prayer of the petitioners, yet so complete is the faith of the common man in the power of these ceremonies, that it may be suggested that prayer and answer are inseparably bound up together; if compulsion is too strong a word, obligation, if milder, is perhaps sufficient.

The spirits are called *basyuka*. The verb *kusyuka* means to rise from the dead, to resume ordinary bodily activities; but the noun formed from this verb, *unsyuka* (of which the plural is *basyuka*), means the inner man, the life of which is independent of the body. Now when the *unsyuka* leaves the body, it does not die, it goes to *ubusyuka*, the land of spirits, where in all respects except that of having a body, it retains its humanity. The spirits are not, however, called *abandu* men; though the related term *imindu*, which, applied to living men, is an insult, is often

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17

MAIN CULTURAL FEATURES

RELIGION

769 The ancestor cult was the main feature of Ngonde religion. As long as a man had alive a father, father's full brother, or a senior brother, this senior kinsman dealt with the ancestral spirits, not only on his behalf, but also on behalf of his wives and children. In the absence of sickness or misfortune no appeal was made to the spirits. If the diviner diagnosed anger of the ancestors as cause, the senior kinsman had to pray for the sick one. If the half-brothers lived at a distance from each other after the death of their father and uncles, each might pray to the spirits to cure a little sickness, but if it persisted a message had to be sent to the senior kinsman. Wrongs which aroused the anger of the spirits were usually breaches of family morality, insult to a father, neglect of responsibilities by an heir. Offerings consisted of a bull, hen, or beer in the case of commoners, a cow in the case of a chief. The worship of dead chiefs as such was not connected with everyday morality. On the offering of cows by chiefs to their immediate ancestors depended the food and health of the chiefdom and the fertility of women and cows.[1]

769 Each Kyungu was buried in the valley around Mbande, and the grave was planted with trees, making a sacred grove. In times of drought and widespread sickness, sacri-
643 fices were made at the groves under the guidance of a diviner.[2] An insult to the living Kyungu was believed to cause a drought. Each chief or noble was believed to be able to avert local misfortunes for his own people, and the head of every family participated in the divinity of his own ancestors. The great commoners of each chief were believed to have independent access to his ancestral spirits, and so to have a hold upon him. The nobles of Ngonde had a similar power over the Kyungu.

643 As the Kyungu's health was bound up with the welfare of the community, elaborate precautions to maintain his health and to protect him from the danger of sexual impurity were taken, and when he ailed he was killed by suffocation.[3]

778 Sacred lagoons by the lake were associated not with the ancestors, but with a vague supreme deity, *Mbamba*.[4]

796 There were two important annual rituals for the whole tribe in addition to the special sacrifices to avert misfortune. One was the clearing out of the ashes each year after the break of the rains, which was performed on the order of the Kyungu, given through the nobles of Ngonde. The second was the elaborate first-fruits ceremony: fruits were offered by the nobles of Ngonde, in the grove of the last dead Kyungu, and then by the great chiefs, each in the grove of his own predecessor. The nobles and the chiefs of the hills had similar rituals, but they were not synchronized with those of the plain.[5]

WITCHCRAFT

754 The Ngonde believe that certain men and women have the power of harming their neighbours and neighbours' cattle without taking any overt action. The witchcraft is
626 hereditary, and of particular virulence if inherited through the mother.[6] Witches exert their influence at night in dreams. There are two kinds of witches, *avamanga*, defender

[1] Wilson, 2, 1936, pp. 256–7; 1, 1936, p. 84; Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 191 and 196, also Ch. VII.
[2] Wilson, 5, 1939, pp. 29–30.
[3] Ibid., pp. 34–6.
[4] Ibid., p. 34; Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 178–97.
[5] Wilson, 5, 1939, pp. 29–34.
[6] Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 250–69.

5:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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kind of grass grows there maize will do well, or maybe ground-nuts. Some grass-lands have very poor soil in which no crop at all will grow properly, the one we call *kyusi* for example, or again the one we call *umyegesi* ("the ant"); no one hoes these lands. Some gardens we hoe on the higher ground, others near the streams, either right in the mud by the water or else in ground that is merely moist. On the higher ground we hoe millet, peas, sweet-potatoes, cassava and some other crops; in the muddy places by the water we hoe yams, building huge ridges for them called *fibimbika*; and there too we sometimes put in (during the dry season) the shoots of sweet potatoes that we shall later plant elsewhere. If the soil is only a little muddy and is mixed with sand, then we plant maize there. The right soil for beans we call *kibumba*—a red soil which is sometimes mixed with sand. Ground-nuts we either plant in the *kibumba* (if it is the sandy kind) or else just in sand. Whenever a man is hoeing a field for millet or ground-nuts or sweet-potatoes, he can tell just from the soil whether his crop will do well or not."[1]

And so also the Nyakyusa well understand the different qualities of pasture. The cattle are herded by small boys but on most mornings one of the men also goes out with the herd to show the boys where to pasture it and what grass-land to avoid.

Into the value of arable land sentiment also enters and men like, *ceteris paribus*, to hoe their gardens where they themselves or their fathers and brothers have hoed before. So too the value of building plots is determined both by practical and emotional considerations: large and relatively level sites on which bananas grow well are preferred to narrow or steeply sloping ones or to sites where bananas do badly, but, on the other hand, of two equally convenient sites that with family associations is normally preferred. And in the case of building sites religious considerations may also enter. A friend of mine told me that, when his father died, he did not move but left his father's site vacant with the new grave upon it; a year or two later his millet crop unaccountably failed and the diviner told him that his father's spirit was angry that no one had "swept his grave," i.e. that the plot had been left vacant. My friend did not actually move, even then, for he preferred his own site; he compromised by the performance of a ritual sacrifice to his father's spirit. But in such cases a man will often move to his dead father's site for fear of further misfortunes.

We have discussed briefly the purposes for which and the techniques by means of which the Nyakyusa use their lands and we have indicated a few of the main considerations which lead them to value some particular

[1] Text written for me by a literate Nyakyusa.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

Mwambelo, younger brother of Mwakasungula, succeeded and abandoning the enclosure at Mbande, went to live by the lake shore.[1] And so yet another step was taken from the traditional religious seclusion. His successors returned to Mbande; but the custom of building an enclosure round the houses of the Kyungu was not resumed. 173

In his reign Mwafulilwa, chief of the next tribe to the south of Ngonde, sought aid against the Ngoni and the men of Ngonde responded and won a battle. But the Ngoni then replied with another night raid in which they found Mwambelo alone in his house and killed him and returned home. Another attack followed before a new Kyungu had been installed, but it was repulsed, "for this time they had come by day!"

"And then the nobles of Ngonde made Gwa Sapasi Kyungu; he was a son of Kalambo, a chief of Ngana; for they said that, as so many of the chiefs of Ngelenge had been killed by the Ngoni, they would now take one of their cousins again as the Kyungu." And now at last Ngonde submitted to the Ngoni. Gwa Sapasi, with the concurrence of all the chiefs and all the nobles save one[2] sent a tusk of ivory to the Ngoni chief Mtwalo. "And from that time forwards the Ngoni never fought with us again."

A few years later, in 1875, after Gwa Sapasi had died and been succeeded by Mwafongo, the Europeans first visited Ngonde. Arab slaves traders established themselves there about the same time, and with the struggle between the two races for the possession of Ngonde the modern period begins. 175

3. *RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS (MIDDLE PERIOD).*

The traditional status of the Kyungus had in part a religious basis.[3] The ruling Kyungu and the spirits of his dead predecessors were believed to form one divine company, the anger of any one of whom had terrible effects: while in his own flesh and in some of his possessions magical power was believed to reside. But the Kyungu was not alone in his religious potency, he was but the greatest of many. The nobles of Ngonde and the territorial nobles, the chiefs both great and small, professional rainmakers and doctors, the great-commoners of the villages, heads of families and even ordinary men and women—all alike were believed to have some access to, some dealings with divine or 643 769 789

[1] Three nobles of Ngonde, in recounting this story, maintained that Mwambelo was mad.

[2] He was Mwenisungo, whose story is omitted here for lack of space.

[3] As this paper is concerned only with political institutions no full analysis of the tribal religion of Ngonde is here attempted, only those aspects of it are dealt with which have political significance.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

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magical powers. And the faith alike in ancestors and in witchcraft gave to every group of subjects a religious hold over their rulers.

(a) *THE THEISTIC ELEMENT.*

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Though the early Kyungus had lived on the stony top of Mbande none of them had been buried there, for "the ground was too hard to dig graves in." They and their successors were all buried in the valley, each in a different spot. Over their graves trees were planted and grew up to form a ring of sacred groves round Mbande. Each grove has a name and the Kyungu who is buried there is usually referred to, not by his own name, but by that of the grove where he lies. Thus Kyungu Mwangonde is referred to as "He of Bwiba," Kyungu Mwakasungula as "He of Ipota," and so on.

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Now drought and widespread sickness were believed to be caused by the anger either of some dead Kyungu or of the living one. "In time of drought they (the nobles of Ngonde) would go to a diviner to enquire who it was who was angry; they would mention all the names of the sacred groves of the Kyungus in turn and he would tell them that it was so and so. So they would tell the (living) Kyungu. And he would give them either a bull or a sheep, together with some beer—they would take one of the pots of beer from his own house, one of the pots which were continually brought by his people as tribute.[1] And he would give them some flour and some cloths also. Then they would go with them into the grove. Now the diviner would have told them that he (the dead Kyungu) was angry because they had omitted (for so long) to build his house. So they would begin by building his house in the grove, they would build a miniature hut with rafters.[2] Next they would kill the beast and hang some of the meat up on a tree—the rest they would eat later outside the grove. Then they would tear up the cloths and fix some of the pieces to the house in the grove—an action which they would explain as 'giving him cloths'. And, finally, they would pour out (some of) the beer and the flour. Nearly always, in time of drought, they would thus build a house in the grove of the Kyungu whom the diviner had mentioned.

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"But occasionally if one of the chiefs had recently insulted the Kyungu, they concluded that it was the living Kyungu himself who was angry. They would go to a diviner and mention all the names of the dead Kyungus, but he would refuse to accept any of them: 'No—no.'

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[1] *Vide infra* section 4.

[2] This is the custom traditional in the sacred groves of all important chiefs, both in Ngonde and among the Nyakyusa. We have seen it done among the Nyakyusa. The hut which we saw built was between two and three feet high.

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And at length he would tell them that it was the living Kyungu who was angry because so and so had insulted him. Then there would be no sacrifice in the grove at all, but the nobles of Ngonde would go to the one who had insulted the Kyungu and charge him with it, asking him what he meant by thus killing them all, would not the whole land starve! And so the wrongdoer would take a cow to the Kyungu who, thereupon, would address the nobles of Ngonde, saying: 'If it was my anger which brought the drought then it will rain (for I am no longer angry). But if the rain does not come then it cannot have been my anger, it must have been some one (of the dead Kyungus) whom you forgot to ask about.' And if, after that, the rain came soon, then it was not likely that anyone would insult the Kyungu again!

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"If, however, it did not rain, then the nobles of Ngonde would approach the Kyungu once more and ask why it had not rained. He would say that he did not know, that he himself was certainly not angry and they must have forgotten someone, they had better go and divine again. And so they would; and then the diviner would tell them that it was so and so (one of the dead Kyungus), and they would go and sacrifice in his grove."

Thus the belief in the power of the dead Kyungus, a power in which their living successor participated, was one of the factors of the central political institutions of Ngonde. The Kyungu did not himself sacrifice in the sacred groves but the nobles of Ngonde did so, with materials provided by him, and from these sacrifices the whole plain was believed to benefit. While to insult the Kyungu was not only treasonable, it was blasphemous, and the whole plain was believed to be cursed with drought or disease in reply. And we have already seen, in the story of Mwakasungula's return from exile,[1] that other prominent members of the royal family also were believed to share this power.

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The absence of central political institutions among the Nyakyusa was, as we shall see, mainly due to economic causes; but in part also this difference can be traced to the climatic difference acting upon similar religious faiths. The Nyakyusa had in the Lwembes, the hereditary chiefs of Lubaga, a line of religious paramounts. Chiefs from all over the district sent gifts to them to ask for health and rain. That they never achieved any secular paramountcy at all was mainly because they were poor. But the difference of rainfall was important too. Droughts in Ngonde occurred frequently, and each one made the people remember their Kyungu's power. North of the Songwe droughts were rare and slight.

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[1] p. 27.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

643 Nor were rain and health the only blessings which were sought in
769 the sacred groves round Mbande, general fertility, the peace of the
country, the absence of rats and the success of the ivory trade were
778 believed to depend in part on the favour of the dead Kyungus. And we
have a little evidence that some of these other blessings also were
believed to be withheld by the anger of a living Kyungu.

The religious powers of dead and living Kyungus, however, were only believed to be effective in the Ngonde plain; the fiefs of the hills, certainly, and, as far as we know, the chiefdoms of the Nyondos and Kamemes also, were unaffected by them. And this fact is correlated with the slighter secular hold which Mbande had over the hills as compared with the plain.

769 Two notable religious rituals of the plain must now be mentioned.
It was customary, first, to clear out the ashes (*ukujola ifikungu*) each
776 year after the break of the rains. In traditional belief the spirits of the ancestors, whether of chiefs or of commoners, were closely associated with the fires in the houses of their descendants; and so it was only by clearing out the old fires regularly that the spirits and their potential anger could be driven away. Every religious ritual which deals with the ancestors, whether in Ngonde or among the Nyakyusa, has the function of driving them away. For, while the Christians believe that sustained communion with God may be a blessed state, the pagans in Ngonde and among the Nyakyusa believe that sustained communion
[787] with the ancestral spirits is always terrible and dangerous; prophecy may flow from it, but if the communion is not broken, if it continues too long, then evil will result; and prophecy is nearly always prophecy of evil. In pagan belief the spirits of the dead come constantly to "brood" on man and his works and have constantly to be satisfied and driven away by ritual.

"Always they used to clear-out the ashes at the new year, at the first hoeing, at the break of the rains in December. They feared that death and disease would spread through the land if they continued living with the old fires, that the spirits in the ground, both the spirits of chiefs and of commoners, would be angry; let them drive the spirits away and hoe in peace. They always remembered to do so each new year; for the old men used to keep these things in mind continually, they never forgot. The Kyungu would summon the whole country to clear out the ashes; and then they would hoe in peace. And at other times too, if prophecy came on someone, they would clear out the ashes again."

The nobles of Ngonde approached the Kyungu and he gave the order to clear out the ashes; messages were sent to the great chiefs and

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the senior territorial nobles of the plain, and they told their juniors. A sacrifice was made in one of the sacred groves of the Kyungus and all fires in the whole Ngonde plain were put out. And then "all the chiefs from every country near Mbande and the nobles and all the great-commoners and all the ordinary men and the women too went to Kyimbwe." At Kyimbwe, which is a cross-roads in the bush, they threw away the ashes of their old fires; while those few people who could not get to Kyimbwe threw them away near their own houses on the same day as the others. At Kyimbwe new fire was made with fire-sticks by the nobles of Ngonde and distributed to the whole plain in order. Great chiefs and senior nobles took it first and passed it to their juniors, chiefs passed to great-commoners, and in each group the common people got it from their own ruling noble or their own great-commoner.

And then, later in the year when the first maize and the first pumpkin leaves were ready to eat, an elaborate first-fruit ceremony was carried out. The first-fruits were offered by the nobles of Ngonde in the grove of the previous Kyungu, the one who had last died. "Then the great chiefs would do so next—Kalonga, Mwakasungula, Mwembelo, Katamba and the chiefs of Ngana also, each in his own sacred grove (i.e. at the grave of his own predecessor in the title). . . . . And then after them everyone, both chiefs and people, each at his father's grave. All offered first-fruits to their own spirits. And finally they would eat themselves, each with his chief wife. But beforehand they would not eat for fear of angering the spirits."

These two rituals concerned the plain alone; the nobles and chiefs of the hills are said to have had similar rituals of their own but they were not synchronized with or dependent upon those of the plain.

In time of tribal war also the Kyungu and the nobles of Ngonde led the people in prayer. All chiefs and nobles were summoned from the plain and the great ones entered the Kyungu's house to receive their instructions: "When he had finished speaking he would tell them to go to pray. So they would leave his house and gather all together, all chiefs and men, and pray. The premier noble of Ngonde would begin, asking each of the sacred groves of the Kyungus in turn to bless them in the fight. And then the great chiefs would pray after them" (each addressing his own predecessors in his title). The territorial nobles did not pray, for it was the royal family alone whose spirits were then addressed. Here again it was the plain alone that was concerned.

Now this organization of religious ritual in the Ngonde plain was both a factor of and itself determined by the general political

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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structure. We shall see in later sections how many details of the secular power of Mbande and of the lesser authorities were dependent upon their religious functions. But the reverse is equally true. Among the Nyakyusa, where the hierarchy of chiefs had scarcely any secular content at all, the organization of religious ritual was far less elaborate. Cattle were sent to Lubaga by the other chiefs to be sacrificed for rain and health; but the "clearing out of the ashes" was done by each chiefdom separately; there was no general first-fruit ritual at all;[1] while, as war was never waged on a tribal basis, prayers and sacrifices for military success were always undertaken by each warring chiefdom alone.

Besides the Kyungus the great chiefs of Ngonde also were believed to be able to avert local droughts and misfortunes in their districts by offerings to their own immediate ancestors; and the lesser chiefs likewise and the territorial nobles—each in his own little area. While among the territorial nobles, the original owners of the land had wider powers. It will be remembered that to them the first Kyungu is said to have given head-cloths and asked for their prayers. Sometimes people would prophesy future misfortune "at Kisindile", or "at Kaluma" or "at Ifumbo," or would prophesy of present misfortunes that such was their source. Then the territorial noble concerned[2] would be formally visited by the nobles of Ngonde, and he and they together would offer sacrifice to his ancestors on behalf of all Ngonde.

And then also there were sacred lagoons near the lake—Nthola, Kambwe, Kibondo, Mulale and Katindi. They were associated not with ancestral spirits at all but with a vaguely defined supreme deity named Mbamba. And beside them also prayers and sacrifices were made from time to time by the nobles of Ngonde.

Over these other spiritual powers we need not linger, save to notice one most significant fact. The participation by the Kyungu in the divinity of his ancestors was no isolated phenomenon in Ngonde. The head of every family in the country, whether of chiefs or commoners, was similarly placed; in his own family and, in the case of a chief or noble, in his own area too, he was both a priest and a demi-god; he dealt with the spirits and by virtue of his relation to them shared their powers; his anger could curse. The Kyungus were but the greatest of many divinities. And thus there was in theistic ritual a high degree of local and family autonomy; local or family misfortunes

[1] Particular people among the Nyakyusa carried it out: reigning chiefs, senior great-commoners, prophets, and any person whose birth was held to be due to magical treatment of a previously barren woman. But only they.

[2] Mwene-kisindile, Mwene-kaluma, Mwene-ifumbo etc.

8: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936) 1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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593 they continually give each other cows; between their respective sons also the exchange usually continues, but between their grandsons it lapses.
593 Reciprocity is expected and can be legally enforced, but it is not insisted
686 upon so long as the two men concerned are friends, and its legal enforcement at once breaks the relationship. If two such half-brothers (or their sons) quarrel, one may take legal action for "separation" (*okolekana*) against the other. The cows that have been handed over by both sides since the beginning of the relationship (perhaps twenty or thirty years before) are counted up, and one or the other is ordered to pay over the balance to make the numbers equal. After this the two are "no longer kinsmen," they have no mutual obligations and do not attend each other's funerals.

593 It is usual for a father to create this relationship between his senior
428 son and the eldest of each group of full-brothers, so that by this exchange of cows the family is held together. The linkage of half-brothers, whether by blood or by "milking each others cows," is important in inheritance. If a man with no full-brother dies and leaves no sons, or sons too young to inherit, then the inheritance passes to a linked half-brother; to a half-brother linked by blood if there is one, if there is not then to one linked by exchange of cows.

771 Religion enters continually into family life and helps to maintain wider kinship bonds also. The Nyakyusa religion falls, broadly, into three parts: The Ancestor cult, Witchcraft and Magic. Taken as a whole their religion, as they believe, secures for them many of the most important values of life, health, good crops and success in various enterprises; it provides an intelligible explanation of death and misfortune by tracing them to the ill-will either of the ancestral spirits or of living men acting through witchcraft or magic; in its rituals it resolves fear and replaces it by hope and confidence; while the believed destructive action of the ancestors and of men is generally, though not entirely, linked with morality.[10] The commonest explanation of misfortune is that some wrong done by the victim, or by his close kinsman, has provoked the spirits or his fellow men to anger.

769 As long as a man has alive a father, a father's full-brother, or a senior
753 brother or half-brother[11] of his own, this senior kinsman deals with the ancestral spirits, not only on his behalf, but also on behalf of his wives and children; and health is the chief value which his prayers are believed to secure for them. In the absence of sickness or misfortune no appeal is

[10] cf. Godfrey Wilson. "An African Morality." *Africa*. Jan. 1936.
[11] Provided the relationship between them has not been legally broken (*vide supra*.).

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ever made to the spirits, but when some member of a family or his wife or child falls sick the anger of the spirits is often suspected as a possible cause. There are usually other reasons suspected as well, and so the sickness is taken to a diviner for diagnosis. Various causes are suggested to the diviner and he selects one among them. If the anger of the spirits is selected then this senior kinsman must pray for the one who is sick, if he is to recover. When half-brothers live at a distance from one another, after their father and his brothers have died, then each may pray to the spirits to cure a little sickness in his own family but if the sickness persists then a message must be sent to the senior kinsman. And, as the anger of the spirits is due to wrong doing, the sinner must reform his ways as well.

The wrongs which rouse the spirits to anger are usually breaches of family morality. If a son does not respect his father or insults him, if an heir neglects to feed and provide for the dead man's children, then when sickness falls on him or his own children it will probably be traced to the anger of the spirits at his behaviour.

Space does not allow any full analysis of religion in family life and in the relationships of kinsmen and affines. Not only the ancestor cult but witchcraft and magic are factors in them. A man's neglect of a wife or his cruelty to her may, it is believed, lead to his falling sick through her witchcraft and that of sympathetic neighbours; his relations with his father-in-law are affected by the fear that if he offends him, his father-in-law may, by magical means, kill his children, and so on.

Wider kinship groupings than the family gather at ceremonies and are recognized in the rules against incest. But there are no clans; there is no descent group continuous down the generations with a common name and definite membership. Each individual family has its own penumbra of kinsfolk, the effective kindred of a man and his son, or of two half-brothers are not all the same, while each single person is especially related by respect, affection and mutual obligations to particular kinsmen beyond his own family. Descent, as we have seen, is patrilineal except in the case of illigitimate children. A man asked for his *ekekɔlɔ* always recites first the names of his paternal forbears as far as he can remember. But if he is related through mother or grandmother to a chief he usually volunteers this fact as part of his *ekekɔlɔ*; and questions always elicit some knowledge of his mother's paternal kinsfolk and a statement that "they are my *ekekɔlɔ* too." Descendants of a common grandfather (either paternal or maternal) are to-day forbidden to marry, and no case of infringment has come to my notice; descendants of a common great-grandfather are supposed not to marry but, I am told,

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769 778 793 come to it. But, on the other hand, everyone knows when a sacrifice is taking place, and, in spite of the influence of missions, most people in the pagan community believe in its efficacy.

782 787 Sacrifices are prompted either by actual misfortune or by prophecies of it. The four sacrifices which I have seen myself were all stimulated by an actual shortage of food, and the hereditary priests have often told me that " now-a-days the chiefs do not listen to us until hunger comes." But, traditionally, sacrifices are said to have been usually prompted by prophecies of coming misfortune which was then averted by them. In each chiefdom the ruling great commoners, the hereditary priests and some private persons as well are believed to have the power of dreaming of misfortune (*okokunguluka*) before it comes. And the chiefs are said always to have listened to these dreams, formerly, and to have acted upon them.

778 173 Among the groves there is an order of seniority ; the older the grove the more chiefdoms are concerned in the sacrifices there. And in Selya is the most important grove of all—Lubaga. All the chiefdoms of Selya, many of the Nyakyusa proper and even some of the neighbouring chiefdoms of the Mwamba are traditionally concerned in its sacrifices. Lubaga, the Nyakyusa say, is the grove of Lwembe, one of the original chiefs who came down the Livingstone Mountains from the East, eight or nine generations ago ; and from him all the present Selya chiefs are descended. The ancestor of the chiefs of the Nyakyusa proper was a brother of Lwembe ; and though the Kukwe and Mwamba chiefs are not related, yet those of the Mwamba who are nearest to Lubaga used to send cows there for sacrifice as well, because of the great reputation that this grove had.

622 782 Sacrifices are still made in the country of the chief of Lubaga (Mwakisisya) for all the surrounding chiefdoms, but the full ritual has not been carried out for fourty years. Traditionally each chief of Lubaga was ritually installed into a position somewhat resembling that of Sir James Frazer's " Divine Kings," a position hedged with taboos, in which not only the sacrifices he made to Lwembe but his own health and fertility also were believed to be intimately connected with the prosperity of his own and neighbouring chiefdoms. But the present chief has never been properly installed, nor was his father before him. The sacrifices at Lubaga are believed to benefit not only the Nyakyusa but also the next [173] tribe to the East, the Kinga, who live on the heights of the Livingstone Mountains ; for Lwembe, they say, was born a Kinga and moved down the mountains to Lubaga, taking the fertility of the soil with him. And

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are redrawn and only the fields in old craters (the most prized and fertile of all) are not re-allotted. Thus the villages of kinsmen of two generations adjoin, and often those of three generations.

On the old chief's death his village headmen become priests of the grove in which he is buried, and, in co-operation with his sons, the new chiefs, sacrifice there on behalf of the two countries into which his old chiefdom is divided. There is a nice balance of power between chief and village headmen in life, and when he dies his two heirs and the headmen (or their heirs) continue to share power, the power which belief in his spiritual force and their ability to guide it gives them. The success or failure of rituals is held largely to depend upon the personal relationships of the leading participants, chiefs and commoner priests.

Besides the ordinary commoner priests (the village headmen of a past generation or their heirs) there are priests of the chiefs' lineage, usually belonging to a junior line to which specific ritual functions, such as rain-making, have been entrusted, and whose office is hereditary in the same way as that of a chief. Kasitile (86),[1] the rain-maker, is such a priest: his grandfather was the brother of a ruling chief (43) and had been appointed as rain-maker (*umpelafula*) and priest (*unyago*), the two functions being separate but overlapping. As rain-maker Kasitile tended the rain stones, as priest he initiated the rituals in certain of the sacred groves, though he did not actually officiate himself. Kasitile was a key informant on ritual and a chapter is devoted to his history, since it epitomizes the relationships between chiefs and commoners.

As we have shown, most of the Nyakyusa and Ngonde chiefs claim some sort of kinship with one another. Those who are nearly related pray together at the groves of their common ancestors, and those more distantly connected join in sacrifice to their founding fathers, but in the communal rituals kinship is neither the dominant theme nor the exclusive principle of association, as it is in the rituals celebrated by private persons. In the communal rituals most of the priests are commoners unrelated to the dead who are honoured, and the sacrifices are held to benefit not only the descendants of the dead, but all those who live in the countries they once ruled. Nevertheless, the symbolism of the communal rituals constantly recalls that of the rituals of kinship; themes which pervade the death ritual recur again in the rituals of 'coming out' and 'cleansing the country'. This background is

[1] Numerals after a name refer to the genealogy of Nyakyusa chiefs facing p. 3.

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accessible in an earlier book, *Rituals of Kinship among the Nyakyusa*,[1] and the details need not be recapitulated here.

Perhaps the reader has already noted a certain difficulty over tenses: 'is' tends to merge into 'was'. When we first visited BuNyakyusa in 1934 missionaries of various denominations had already been at work, and a foreign government in control, for forty years past. Between 1934 and my last visit in 1955 the changes have been great, but I use the present tense for things seen at first hand, whether earlier or later, and a separate chapter is devoted to the twenty years' change. It is well to recognize at the outset, however, that in 1934 the sanctity and power of the 'divine kings' was already questioned and their rituals were curtailed, and even the pagan cosmology of the Nyakyusa was beginning to exhibit traces of Christian influence. One striking example was the changing, or rather the fluid, connotation of the name *Kyala*.

Two new types of organization developed in BuNyakyusa with the arrival of the Europeans: churches which are based on a principle of association wholly new to the pagan tradition—common belief as opposed to kinship or contiguity; and a centralized system of government. To these have now been added trading concerns, of which the most important are co-operative societies exporting coffee and rice.

The subject of this book is (i) the traditional rituals celebrated on behalf of chiefdoms and groups of chiefdoms, and (ii) the changing ideas and values apparent as a section of the Nyakyusa turn from paganism to Christianity. In the concluding chapters an attempt is made to demonstrate the links between the changes in social structure and the changes in ritual.

[1] Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship among the Nyakyusa*, 1957.

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539 fierce warriors. They were first driven out, then later Lwembe (3) was driven out too. When Lwembe was a child, herding cattle with his fellows, he moulded cattle of clay and they became alive; so with lions and leopards, too; he also took up a handful of earth and it became beans or millet. His fellows told Mwemusi of this and he was astonished. Then Mwemusi sent men to watch; they went early in the morning and hid themselves and watched; they watched him making all these things. Then they wanted to kill him, but the forefather of Mwakalukwa [another Kinga chief] gave him two cows; he was a friend and said: 'Leave the country, they want to kill you, take these cows and eat them on the road.' Lwembe went away with Kissoule and Mwamaloba (Mwamalunguka) and two wives and all his animals.

These three, Nkekete (1), Kyala (2), and Lwembe (3), were driven out by Mwemusi, but Lwembe's younger brothers, the BaMwalukissa (4), were left. When Lwembe went away, Mwemusi's men followed him, wishing to kill him, but they feared his animals, and did not try.

Nkekete (1) set out to the Lake [Nyasa] and went into a stream; he is in the water now, in a stream with pools near the Lake, in Kisi country. Kyala (2) went and built among stones in a cave. When the [177] Europeans came they took rifles and shot at Kyala in the place where he had built, so he moved to a different place. Of old he was in a cave washed by the waters of the Lake, but after the Europeans came he moved to his present cave at the boundary between Kisselelo's and Kisi country. Kyala had fowls there; some saw them in the old days [782] and some did not. Nkekete is in a stream with pools in it; there (at Lumbila in Kisi country) men sacrifice a cow. Kyala's sheep are killed near his cave.

Neither Nkekete nor Kyala had any children, but Lwembe (3), who went off alive, begot many children. We speak with them. Nkekete and Kyala were killed, Lwembe was not. . . . All the Kinga chiefs when praying in the sacred groves say the names of their fathers [782] who have died, and also the names of Nkekete, Kyala, and Lwembe, [769] in that order . . . Lwembe was the youngest of the three brothers . . . Nkekete and Kyala only made crops—millet and beans. We ask for fertility of the soil (*imboto*), and sunshine, and rain from them, but not animals. From Lwembe we ask for milk, and fertility of men and cattle, and snakes, and goats, and sheep, and all crops. Lwembe has everything. We ask for sunshine and rain from Lwembe as well.

When Lwembe went down into Selya he found the hill people (*BaMwamba*) and the people of the plain (Mwakyembe's men)[1] already there. They feared him because he had all things, and they still fear him. He was greater than Nkekete. They cut Nkekete's throat, but they couldn't kill Lwembe. He made the small lakes—all of them. He

[1] In other versions Mwakyembe is a descendant of Lwembe.

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The balance between chiefs and commoners is explicit. So also is their dependence on *both* cultivation and herding, and it should be noted that, though the Nyakyusa speak of themselves as stock men, they are not pastoralists to the same extent as the Masai or the Nuer. The number of cattle in Rungwe District today is less than half the human population, and men traditionally have done the heaviest share of cultivation.

In every version of the myth the tension between father and son, or older and younger brother, is stressed. In Nyakyusa society the father (or his eldest son who replaces him) controls the family property and exacts obedience from his juniors who continue to show their respect after his death by sacrifices. The tale of Kyala and Lwembe celebrates the triumph of the junior. Thus, at the heart of the very ritual which sanctifies seniority there is the assertion of the victory of the son and younger brother. The myth expresses the aspirations of subordinates—of commoners and junior kinsmen—as well as the power of chiefs and seniors.

As we have already noted, the heroic cycle makes no reference to the peculiar Nyakyusa institution of age-villages. Their charter is a quite separate myth[1] which tells of a chief who looked on his daughter-in-law and loved her and took her, and this so shocked men that in future fathers and sons built separately, so that a father-in-law should never see his daughter-in-law.

There are other hints of the eternal theme. Besides the saga of Lwembe there is another quite different tale of the origin of fire, which is less often related. In it a girl who had angered her father by breaking his drinking calabash fled from BuKinga to the Nyakyusa valley, where she found people who ate their food raw. She made fire and cooked for them and 'all women came to her to learn to cook'. The long-necked calabash, used as a drinking vessel and in prayer to the shades, is a man's most personal possession destroyed at his death, and it stands for a husband, while cooking is a symbol of the sexual activity of women, so the myth is perhaps a drama of incest, but we have no direct evidence of this.

This last is the only tale in which a woman appears as a benefactor. In general, the mythology is that of a strongly patrilineal society in which men are dominant. The wives of Lwembe who walked behind their lord, shepherded by a lion,

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 85.

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CHAPTER III

THE 'DIVINE KINGS'

(a) CHARACTERISTICS OF 'DIVINE KINGS'

THE heroic myths and genealogies proclaim the origin of chieftainship, and point to a distinction between ordinary chiefs and those we call 'divine kings'. Two remote ancestors who were pre-eminent are worshipped as heroes and creators, their graves are centres at which a large number of chiefdoms join in celebration, and living representatives are selected in every generation bearing their names. These are the 'divine kings', the Lwembe of Lubaga (in the centre of Nyakyusa country) and the Kyungu of Mbande near Karonga in Nyasaland. A third hero, Kyala, is associated with the cave, PaliKyala, near Ikombe at the north-east corner of the Lake, and he is worshipped in the same way as the other two, except that the priest of the cave is not his descendant and does not embody him. According to the myth, Kyala was the brother of Lwembe, but died without issue. However, the word for chiefs—*aba-nya-fyale*—is popularly believed to mean 'the sons of Kyala'.[1]

Kyala is one hero among others, but his name is *also* used in the sense of 'the lord': a chief is *kyala gwake* (his lord) to a commoner, a father is *kyala gwake* to his son or daughter 'because he created him' and a shade is *kyala* to his living kinsman (*unsyuka jo kyala*). Of one who performs a feat—something difficult—it is said 'he is Kyala'.[2] This usage is said to be very old, but there is yet another meaning of the word which is new. *Kyala* was used by the European missionaries (who first established themselves near PaliKyala) as their translation of 'God'. Today these three conceptions are inextricably mixed: Kyala the hero, Kyala 'the

[1] I am indebted to the Reverend Paul Fueter for drawing my attention to this point. It is doubtful whether *Kyala* and *fyale* in fact come from the same root. *Fyale* in Hehe means the daughter of a chief (A. G. O. Hodgson, 'Some Notes on the Wahehe of Mahenge District, *J.R.A.I.*, lvi (1926), p. 40). In Bena *nyakiyara* means 'my husband's father or mother' (A. T. and G. M. Culwick, *Ubena of the Rivers*, p. 196). In Ganda *mukyala* means 'lady', mistress of a household and garden (J. Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 44). cf. Nyika, *fiala* 'to beget, to bear' (J. L. Krapf and J. Rebmann, *A Nyika-English Dictionary*, edited by T. H. Sparshott, 1887).

[2] cf. F. R. Lehmann, 'Some field notes on the Nyakyusa', *Sociologus*, New Series, 1951, vol. 5, p. 66.

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769 643 lord', and Kyala the Christian deity. In the sacrifices at Lubaga and the groves of various chiefs, the name Kyala was mentioned repeatedly, as will be shown. Some may interpret this as evidence of a traditional belief in an overriding deity. We think that in most cases it is used in the sense of Kyala the hero, or Kyala 'the lord', but after forty years[1] and more of missionary activity it is not possible to establish exactly what the traditional conception of Kyala was. Moreover, it will be obvious that many of the speakers [177] quoted in later chapters now entertain religious notions which have been unconsciously, and sometimes profoundly, modified by Christian ideas, a phenomenon especially noteworthy in their references to Kyala.

769 782 All the Nyakyusa proper (that is those of Selya, the Lake plain, and Masoko) send cattle to sacrifice at Lubaga (the grove of Lwembe), and several of the Kinga chiefs send there too. The people of Ngonde send to the Kyungu at Mbande, but not to Lubaga, while the people living north of the Songwe did not ever send to Mbande. Some of the people of the Lake plain (Mu-Ngonde) and various Kinga chiefs send to PaliKyala as well as to Lubaga, but the hill people never send to PaliKyala, nor did the Kisi who lived around PaliKyala send to Lubaga. In other words, Lwembe and Kyala were 'brothers' and it was possible to sacrifice to both, though people living close to one centre did not send to the other. All those living south of the Songwe river looked to Mbande; those north of it to Lubaga or PaliKyala. Lwembe, Kyala, and Kyungu were ancestors, honoured primarily by their own descendants or by those of a brother, but they were also divine heroes who might be appealed to by unrelated people through their priests.

The distinction between a 'divine king' and an early ancestor who established a line of chiefs is not a sharp one, and we have indeed been uncertain whether or not to class Mwangomale (4K),[2] the founder (or at least a notable son) of the Kukwe line, with Lwembe and Kyungu. Sacrifices used to be made to Mwangomale at the grove of Kabale by a number of Kukwe chiefs, but we have no evidence either of the formal installation of a living representative in each generation or of sacrifices by unrelated people, and therefore do not include Mwangomale among the 'divine kings'. The early inhabitants of the Rungwe

[1] Field-work began in 1934.

[2] Numerals followed by K refer to the genealogy of Kukwe chiefs facing p. 27.

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area, the Penja, have a grove, Lukata, where they worship their founding ancestor, and the Nyika living on the west bank of the Kiwira river have their grove, Lubaga, twenty miles or more from the Lubaga in Selya and unconnected with it. A third distinct group, the Saku, who were the first inhabitants of the south-eastern part of Rungwe District, have their own grove, Nkeso, where their progenitors Mwamakula and Mwalukinge were buried. None of these has anything like the prestige and sanctity of the Lwembe or the Kyungu, but they are probably the prototype from which the 'divine kings' developed.

What circumstances produced a 'divine king' at Lubaga and not (so far as our limited knowledge goes) at Kabale we do not know, but we can show how the 'divine kingship' at Mbande, near the Lake shore, developed rather differently from the originally similar institution at Lubaga which is forty miles from the Lake. The Kyungu gradually acquired political power in a way in which the Lwembe did not. Among the Nyakyusa the 'sons of Lwembe' spread through the country establishing themselves as independent chiefs. They acknowledged the mystical supremacy of the Lwembe, and sent cattle to him to sacrifice, but they were sovereigns in their own territories. Just what this mystical supremacy of Lwembe implied was and still is often a matter of dispute, as we shall see. On the death of a chief his country was normally divided into two independent sections, each ruled by one of his sons. One heir sometimes fought the other and reduced him to a subordinate position, but the number of independent chiefdoms appears to have increased fairly steadily, and their size did not diminish in proportion, for the Nyakyusa chiefs have been expanding their area of occupation over a long period, establishing themselves as rulers over scattered and unorganized peoples with less developed techniques than their own, or colonizing unoccupied forest country. Expansion into uncultivated forest is still going on (1955), and were it not for the vigilance of the British Administration it is almost certain that the Safwa people would have been conquered and absorbed like the Penja, Lugulu, and others before them.[1] In 1936 over 100 independent chiefdoms were recognized by the people themselves, and they varied in size from 100 to 3,000 adult men.

In Ngonde the development was different. In the early period all the sons of the Kyungu, save two, were killed, and the territorial

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 4.

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access. It was the nobles who were the effective rulers of the country; the divine Kyungu was the centre, a source of mystical power, a numinous symbol of unity, but not a judge or an administrator. Gradually, however, the Kyungus emerged from seclusion; they descended from the hill of Mbande; later they ceased to live within a stockade; in the crises of the Ngoni invasion the Kyungu in office (a notable warrior before his accession to the stool) broke tradition by himself taking arms. 'When the Ngoni came their enmity was like that of the lions and their number like that of the ants, and so Kyungu Mwakasungula, seeing his people were terrified, took up arms in person, and said he would die fighting. And his people heard with awe and astonishment that he himself had come to fight and they determined to die with him.' The next stage was a development of the judicial functions of the Kyungu until, in the present generation, the transformation from god to magistrate was complete.[1]

We turn now to the detailed description of the rituals at each shrine.

(*b*) LUBAGA

Lubaga is a hill dominating the central part of the Nyakyusa valley and on its slopes are signs of old and intensive cultivation. There an early Lwembe (19) lived and was buried, there is the grove where he is worshipped, and there his descendant chosen as 'the living Lwembe' should build. According to tradition the 'sons of Lwembe' spread all over the Nyakyusa valley as chiefs, but two senior lineages, that of Mwampondele (27) and that of Mwakisisya (56), remained near Lubaga, and from them was chosen, alternately, the living embodiment of the 'divine king', the Lwembe. Men feared greatly to be chosen, for they feared to be 'killed by the grove', and indeed the Lwembe rarely lived long. He must not fall ill or all the people of the country would do so likewise; therefore if he ailed he was smothered by his priests who stuffed up his nostrils and other passages of his body. Towards the end of our stay in BuNyakyusa Kasitile made a formal statement on this point in the presence of another priest, Mwamakunda:

The Lwembes were not sick. They said: 'I am going, I have eaten food at home, at the place of the shade', and they died that day; they

[1] The change in the position of the Kyungu from the earliest period is discussed in detail by Godfrey Wilson in *The Constitution of Ngonde*.

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769 643 were not ill, they were not troubled as we are. For later in the evening, while the Lwembe was still alive, the commoner priests removed his nails and hair; they came near and plucked them off. He shouted: 'Who is snatching at me?' They replied: 'No one', and then they smothered him with cloth in the nostrils and in the anus, and he went away [i.e. he died]. . . . They did it only when he had initiated it himself by saying: 'I have eaten food in the land of the shades'; they [775] did not begin it themselves. . . . They collected the relics in a little bamboo flask, and a priest treated them so that Lwembe might not go away with the food to the land of the shades, that the fertility of the soil (*ilifugo*), this *ifingila*, might always remain above.

[778] These relics, the hair and the nails, were held to be magically connected through their growth with the growth of crops.

643 While the Lwembe lived he was secluded—ordinary men did not see him—and he was subject to numerous taboos. For example, [784] he might not tread in water lest the country should be flooded; he never bathed in a stream (as Nyakyusa men do daily) and was carried across any river when travelling; he must not sit on a green banana leaf lest the bananas in the country should fail, but was always provided with a skin to sit upon, and he ate only the middle portion of a banana throwing away the ends for 'if he finished the whole of a banana he would create hunger in the country'. No one might grasp his hand, or drink out of the same calabash as he, save the priests of his own age; if he drank from a calabash when travelling he took it with him, for 'if he left it behind he left hunger in that place'.

The selection of the Lwembe was in the hands of the hereditary priests of Lubaga and the hereditary Kinga priests, who come from BuKinga to sacrifice at Lubaga. The man they choose must be of good character—at the time we were in BuNyakyusa the only willing candidate was rejected because 'he is a bad man, a thief, they refuse to have a thief as priest'—he must exhibit in his own home the power of fertility. 'They don't catch just anyone, but [842] one with children, and cattle, and fertility of the fields in his own homestead. If the man taken as chief is not fertile and rich there will be many sterile people in the homesteads, and much disease and hunger.'

When the priests had decided upon the man of their choice, they seized him and set him upon a sacred skin and a pad of leaves; and it was believed that once he had been set thereon he [761] would die if he refused office; tales were told of a younger brother

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782 Lwembe, this is your millet beer, we complain of hunger, oh thou
796 Mwampondele (27), thou Lwembe.

Then the milk was poured likewise and again they prayed for milk and calves, for children and health:

Here is your milk . . . may the locusts pass, may sickness be slight, may milk be plentiful, may the cows calve!

Finally the bamboo beer was poured out, too, and both the Kinga priests prayed in Kinga speaking of hunger. Mwanjala, instructed by Nsyanigwa, took some bamboo beer into his mouth and blew it three times in different directions, saying, between blowing: 'May the rain come.'

The bull was killed by Mwanjande (?). Nsyanigwa first gave the axe and knife to Mwanjala saying: 'This axe and knife [an unhafted and very old spearhead] I, Nsyanigwa, brought from BuKinga to kill the bull, go and kill it.' Mwanjala asked: 'Shall I not give the axe to my younger brother?' and Nsyanigwa replied: 'Yes, give it to him.' So Mwanjala gave it to Mwanjande who killed the bull with one blow at the back of the head. Mwansasa (a commoner priest) cut up the carcass, collecting the first stream of blood in a pot. Then the sacred meat was taken from the fore-
[778] legs, that from the right leg being placed on a plantain leaf, that from the left on a leaf of sweet banana. It was cut up and carried by Kitega (heir of 57?), who walked behind Mwanjala and the two Kinga priests, to the tree where they had poured the beer and milk. Mwanjala turned to the group of those sitting talking and shouting and said: 'Friends, a spear will go to the shades
● [769] [i.e. the shades will be offended by your noise], be quiet', and they fell silent until the offering of meat was made. Then Mwanjala scraped a hollow in the cleared earth at the root of the tree with his foot and threw into it seven or eight pieces. He and the Kinga prayed, while Kitega stood silently holding the rest of the meat:

Oh thou Lwembe, thou Mwampondele (27), stand by us, this is your bull. . . . Give us children, milk, cattle, food; may sickness be slight . . . stand by us.

All this meat was taken from the plantain leaf—the men's portion. At the end, as they walked away Kitega asked: 'What about the women's meat?' And Mwanjala repeated his question. The Kinga replied: 'Are there two sacred places? No! There is no sacrifice

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instructed us, you have taught us the customs, we did not know them, we thought that when the food came that was all.' 782 796

Kasitile said: 'Yes, I do it as our fathers did it.' Then they discussed the dispute between Mwakisisya and Kasitile and agreed that Kasitile had got the better of Mwakisisya with the reference to his own reluctance to provide cattle for sacrifice.

Kasitile was determined to extract a cow for sacrifice from the chief Mwaipopo (116) also, and presently he said:

Friends, listen, let us report at home that we used hard words, we insulted Mwakisisya, we said there is nothing left to eat though we are not really starving. What has come over me? Why am I ill? Let Mwaipopo pay a cow.

The following day Mwamalunguka, one of the priests of Lubaga, explained what was meant by the complaint of insults from Selya:

The people of Mwaipopo (116) do really insult us, and since the Europeans have given them a Court they have begun to say that Mwakisisya (111) is a priest, not a chief, but just an old priest (*inyago*), and we his men are all angry to hear this because Mwakisisya was always the senior. And they do not send us cattle to sacrifice, they say: 'It's European times now, all that is finished.' [177] [578]

But of Kasitile's retort that Mwakisisya himself did not listen to his priests at home, Mwamalunguka said: 'Indeed it is so, that was an excellent reply.'

The party going up to Lubaga and back travelled dry, but on the return journey Kasitile noticed that the road was wet and he remarked, 'The rain follows us again', and it was true, clouds were gathering quickly. An hour and a half after they got home heavy rain began and continued for three or four hours. During the preceding weeks there had been many heavy showers and bright spells, unnoticed and of no particular significance, but the downpour on the day of the sacrifice was immediately connected with it.

Three weeks later the rain had almost stopped and people were talking of drought. Kasitile was quick to link this with the failure to follow up the offering at Lubaga with sacrifices in the groves of the chiefs. On the sixth of April he spoke his mind to Mwambuputa, the senior village headman of Mwaipopo, when both were visiting us. 769 782 796

Where is the rain? [said Kasitile] I am at fault, and my child Mwaipopo (116) also. He ought to provide a cow to kill at Mwaijonga's

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(82) grove. According to custom, we should kill a bull here at the same time as one is killed at Lubaga. A messenger from there finds us eating. That was the custom when the chiefs were really chiefs. Now we neglect the rituals. Mwakisisya (111) cut a ripe banana stem for us, but now the bananas are rotting in the homesteads without ripening [owing to our failure to sacrifice]. If our fathers did not sleep they sacrificed cattle, but if we do not sleep we merely offer beer.

Then Kasitile recalled the quarrel between the men of Mwaipopo (116) and those of Lubaga.

Why did you insult Mwakisisya (111) saying 'What remains of your power?' When we built the Court House in Mwaipopo's country, Mwakisisya's men came to help, and some advised that a beast should be sent to Lubaga to seek blessing on the Court, but others said: 'What use is Lubaga?' . . . Mwakisisya cut a banana stem for us and said 'Seek another cow oh thou Mwakagile' (59, i.e. identifying Kasitile with the grandfather of the chief Mwaipopo whom he represented).

This, however, was an invention of Kasitile's. He continued: 'I, Kasitile, have seen a sacrifice at the grove of Mwaijonga (82) twice, at that of Mwaipopo (115) once, and at that of Mwakabule (117) once, but at Lubaga Kyala has received us frequently.' To which Mwambuputa replied: 'Yes, Kyala has helped us.'

Under pressure from Kasitile and the other priests of his chiefdom Mwaipopo did eventually provide a cow for sacrifice at the grove of his father Mwaijonga (82) but the description of that ritual is deferred to a later chapter.

A fundamental conception in Nyakyusa religion is that the proper working of the natural order depends upon harmony of the social order; on proper co-operation between the 'divine king' and his 'sons' the chiefs, between priests and chiefs, and between them and the whole community. If the Lwembe or a rain-maker is offended, that causes drought or flood in the area of his influence. When there is heavy rain in Selya it is said, 'There is anger at Lubaga' or 'There is anger at Lwembe's place'. Mwanjala II (78) talking of how angry he had been over an insult remarked, 'Had it been the wet season there would have been a torrent of rain.'

And not only does quarrelling between chiefs and priests bring public misfortune; it reacts upon their own health. How Kasitile linked his ill-health with the quarrel between Mwakisisya (111) of Lubaga and the men of Mwaipopo (116) over the Court, and Mwaipopo's failure to provide cattle for sacrifice has just been

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643 too hard to dig graves in'. They and their successors were all
778 buried in the valley, each in a different spot. Over their graves
[766] trees were planted and grew up to form a ring of sacred groves round Mbande. Each grove has a name and the Kyungu who is buried there is usually referred to, not by his own name, but by that of the grove where he lies. . . . We traced sixteen groves in the plain surrounding Mbande and the nobles who pointed them out remembered participating in celebrations at all except that of the last Kyungu. The ruling Kyungu and the spirits of his
● [769] dead predecessors were believed to form one divine company, the anger of any one of whom had terrible effects, and both living and dead were placated with offerings.

778 In time of drought the nobles of Ngonde would go to a diviner
787 to inquire who it was who was angry; they would mention all the
782 names of the sacred groves of the Kyungus in turn and he would
821 tell them that it was so and so. They would inform the living
643 Kyungu and he would give them a bull or a sheep, together with some beer—they would take one of the pots of beer from his own house, brought by his people as tribute. And he would give them some flour and cloths also. Then they would go with them into the grove and build a miniature hut. Next they would kill the beast and hang some of the meat up on a tree—the rest they would eat later outside the grove. Then they would tear up the cloths and fasten some of the pieces on to the hut in the grove—an action they would explain as 'giving him cloths'. And finally, they would pour out some of the beer and the flour. Nearly always, in time of drought, they would thus build a hut and make an offering in the grove of the Kyungu whom the diviner had mentioned.

643 But occasionally, if one of the chiefs had recently insulted the
688 Kyungu, they concluded that it was the living Kyungu himself
787 who was angry. They would go to a diviner and mention all the
689 names of the dead Kyungus, but he would refuse to accept any
821 of them: 'No . . . no.' And at length he would tell them that it was the living Kyungu who was angry because so-and-so had insulted him. Then there would be no sacrifice at the grove at all, but the nobles of Ngonde would go to the one who had insulted the Kyungu and charge him with it, asking him what he meant by thus killing them all, would not the whole land starve? And
643 so the wrongdoer would take a cow to the Kyungu who, there-
821 upon, would address the nobles of Ngonde, saying: 'If it was my

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anger which brought the drought then it will rain (for I am no longer angry). But if the rain does not come then it cannot have been my anger, it must have been someone [of the dead Kyungus] whom you forgot to ask about.' 'And if, after that, the rain came soon, then it was not likely that anyone would insult the Kyungu again.' If, however, it did not rain, then the nobles of Ngonde would approach the Kyungu once more and ask why it had not rained. He would say that he did not know, that he himself was certainly not angry, and they must have forgotten someone, they had better go and divine again. And so they would, and then the diviner would tell them that it was so-and-so (one of the dead Kyungus) and they would go and sacrifice in his grove.

Thus to insult Kyungu was not only treasonable, it was blasphemous, and the whole plain was believed to be cursed with drought or disease in reply. An 'insult' might mean any neglect of the obligations of the chiefs and nobles and commoners of the plain to their lord.

The people of Ngonde hoed large fields as tribute to the Kyungu and if they failed to do so 'he grew angry and poured all the water out of the pot in which he kept his rain stones' (*vide infra*, p. 114) and 'the sky dried up'. Then the chiefs called their men to hoe. . . . 'They hoed and hoed and hoed and their wives planted, then the rain came in a torrent. . . . Kyungu created much rain.'

Or if an elephant hunter neglected to send the Kyungu one of the tusks of any elephant he killed he would not kill another. 'The country beneath was angry . . . the shades of the dead Kyungus . . . they were angry saying: "Why do you stint our child?" '

The rainfall in the Ngonde plain is less than half what it is in the Nyakyusa valley and anxiety about rainfall was constantly shown in the communal rituals; elephant hunting was also a matter of concern in a way in which it was not among the Nyakyusa and this too is reflected in rituals; but there was also the preoccupation with health and fertility, as in the prayers at Lubaga. In the groves circling Mbande the nobles prayed: 'May the sterile bear children, may the cattle and fowls increase, may the children sleep and not cry at night, may the witches not injure anyone.' And as we shall see, it was health and fertility that men had in mind when they cleared out the ashes each year after the break of the rains.

Towards Christmas time, when the first maize and the first

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769 796 pumpkin leaves were ready to eat, an elaborate first-fruit ceremony was formerly carried out. The new season's food was offered first by the nobles of Ngonde in the grove of the previous Kyungu, the one who had last died.

[778] The great chiefs would do so next, each at his own sacred grove (the grave of his own predecessor in the title). And after them everyone, both chiefs and people, each at his father's grave. All offered first fruits to their own shades. And finally they would themselves eat, each with his chief wife. But they would not eat beforehand for fear of angering the shades.

643 794 [721] In time of tribal war also the Kyungu and nobles of Ngonde led the people in prayer. All chiefs and nobles were summoned from the plain and the great ones entered the Kyungu's house to receive their instructions:

[782] When he had finished speaking he would tell them to go and pray. So they would leave his house and gather all together, all the chiefs, and the other men, and pray. The premier noble of Ngonde would begin asking each of the sacred groves of the Kyungus in turn to bless them in the fight. And then the great chiefs would pray after him.

This organization of religious ritual in the Ngonde plain was both a factor of and itself determined by the general political structure. Many details of the secular power of Mbande and of the lesser authorities were dependent upon their religious functions, but the reverse is equally true. Among the Nyakyusa, where the hierarchy of chiefs had scarcely any secular significance, the organization of religious ritual was far less elaborate. Cattle [782] were sent to Lubaga by the chiefs to be sacrificed for rain and health; but the 'clearing out of the ashes' was done by each chiefdom separately; there was no general first-fruits ritual at all; while, as war was never waged on a tribal basis, prayers and sacrifices for military success were always undertaken by each warring chiefdom alone.

643 789 [952] [293] [778] The majesty (*ubunkye*) of the Kyungu was cultivated in a variety of ways. He smeared himself with ointment made from lion fat, and his bed was built up with elephant tusks and lion pelts. He was enthroned on the sacred iron stool called Kisumbi, he had a spear, Kamima, and Mulima, a porous piece of iron 'like a mouth organ' used to make rain, all handed down from the first Kyungu. His ombwa tails, set with medicines in horn handles, were waved in

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643 very oldest fled from his approach. Even in speech fearful circumlocutions were used to refer to his journeying—'The country is on the move'—'the great hill is moving'—'the mystery is coming'. It was taboo both for the old men who stayed to see him, and for those who entered the sacred enclosure, ever to greet him in the usual way. Falling down and clapping the hands was the only greeting for the Kyungu.

From the wives of the Kyungu also men fled in terror, fearing lest they be compromised and thrown over the cliff of Mbande, and this both added to the atmosphere of terror which surrounded him and was an expression of it.

Of the effects of personal relationships upon public events we heard much less in Ngonde than in Selya for we lived there for a much shorter period, but there were indications that, as in Selya, public misfortune was traditionally attributed to quarrels between the nobles of Mbande and within the family of the [731] Kyungu. One fearful drought was thought to have been caused by the exile of Kyungu's son, Mwakasungula,[1] and men tell how the rain came down in torrents on his return. The nobles also asserted their power of calling on the shades of the Kyungu to [729] punish him when he did wrong, and rebuking him over beer telling him, 'It was we who caused you to be ill, don't do it again'. Since he was killed by his nobles if he really fell ill their power over him was incxorable.

(*d*) PALIKYALA[2]

778 PaliKyala is a cave at the north-east corner of Lake Nyasa
769 where sacrifices are made to the hero, Kyala (*a*). It is on the border between Nyakyusa, Kisi, and Kinga country; the chiefs are Nyakyusa, but of Kinga extraction,[2] while many of the commoners are Kisi. Nyakyusa is generally spoken as the first language, Kisi as the second, and Nyakyusa, Kinga, and Kisi all sacrifice to Kyala. As indicated in the myth already quoted (*vide supra*, p. 8) the location of the shrine has changed from one cave to another; according to one version, Kyala was driven out by Europeans; according to another, 'the Lake rose and roared and destroyed all the pots in the cave and the roar was heard in the mountains by the Kinga' and after that Kyala moved.

793 The ritual differs from that at Lubaga and Mbande in that

[1] Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Njenda*, p. 26.
[2] They are not of the lineage of Lwembe.

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8. COMMUNION WITH THE SHADES

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CHAPTER V

SACRIFICES AT THE GROVES OF CHIEFS

(a) THE PLACE, OCCASION, AND FORM OF SACRIFICE

778. A CHIEF is buried near the trees planted at his 'coming out' and around the grave a thicket grows up. It is taboo for men to cut 769 saplings or brushwood there and since trees grow very fast in the [137] climate and soil of the Nyakyusa valley, the thicket soon becomes a grove, and there sacrifices to the dead chief are made. The priests look for the stone planted at his marriage, and place the offering beside it. How long a chief is so honoured depends on how conspicuous he was as a ruler or warrior, and perhaps also on [782] whether the sacrifices are judged to be efficient in producing rain and health or not. Mbyanga and Kabale, two groves which are particularly honoured, were the shrines of founders of expanding lineages. At Mbyanga was planted a cutting of a tree which sprouted from the grave of Mwakisambwe (30) who had first occupied the country in which Mbyanga is situated. He is often spoken of as having been 'buried' at Mbyanga, in fact he was carried back ten miles to Lubaga, whence he had come, for burial. But he is worshipped at Mbyanga and we attended a sacrifice there for which his great-great-great-grandson, Mwaihojo (147) the chief, provided a cow, and Mwaihojo's grandsons ate the holy food. In contrast to this, the grave of Mwaipopo's (116) younger brother, who had once ruled a country but was defeated in war and whose sons had died, was completely neglected; no one sacrificed there. We knew more than a dozen chiefs' groves at which sacrifices were made, and there must have been a great many more in different parts of BuNyakyusa.

643 Since every ruling chief normally had two heirs, sacrifices 769 involved co-operation between independent chiefdoms—two chiefs at the grove of their father, four at that of their grandfather, and so on. But if there is friction between the chiefs, some branches of the lineage cease to participate, saying that the connexion is 'too distant', and celebrate at the groves of their nearer ancestors only. This happened at the sacrifice of Mbyanga which we [578] attended (*vide infra*, pp. 79-81). The sanction for co-operation is [688] the belief that quarrelling between kinsmen annoys the shades and

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may nullify any ritual, but often it is not strong enough to overcome the fissiparous tendencies of the lineage. In theory a celebration at the grove of a senior should precede that at the grove of a junior and sacrifices at Lubaga would be followed by sacrifices at the groves of the 'sons of Lwembe' in order of seniority, but this does not happen in practice nowadays and we doubt whether it ever did, since a hierarchy was not organized and maintained by a central authority as in Ngonde. In 1935 a celebration at the grove of Mwaijonga (82) preceded one at the grove of his great-grandfather Mwakisambwe (30) by a month, as we shall see.

Sacrifices are made when a drought or flood occurs, or a plague of locusts, or an epidemic among men or cattle; when fishing is poor in the chiefdoms of the plain, or war is imminent. They occur most often during the 'winter' in the hills, when a malaria-sodden people feel the chill of damp mists and cool south winds, and in October, just before the break of the rains, when the country is parched; but they are not confined to these periods. In theory the village headmen and the priests who 'watch over the country' foresee *coming* misfortune in dreams, and avert it by making the appropriate sacrifices. And they are helped by ordinary people who are dreaming repeatedly or falling into a trance or fit, and prophesying evil and jabbering of 'a black cow, a black cow' or some other appurtenance of sacrifice. But in practice the prophecies generally occur when there is hunger or plague in the land, or an omen (such as a python or a ground hornbill behaving oddly) has been seen.

The dreamers are *abasololi* or *abakunguluka*, and, as these names indicate, they are believed to have descended into the land of the shades. *Ukusolola*[1] means to go down into something, like the roots of a tree into the earth, and *ukukungula ingungula* means to pluck a banana flower which (as was shown in *Rituals of Kinship*) is a symbol for a corpse and is buried; so the *abakunguluka* are those who have been buried in the earth. '*Abakungululka* go to the land of the shades and return. . . . An *unkungululka* plucks up the "blessed grass" (*ikisejelo*) in his swept courtyard and goes beneath and sees.[2] . . . He goes down into the earth beneath and takes the chief to the land of the shades when he dies, and he also sees the witches. . . .' More rarely, the *unsololi* or *unkungululka* is

[1] *Ukusolola*—a breech presentation, the implication being that the infant's head is in *kuyuka*, but children born in this way are not necessarily prophets.

[2] cf. Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 73, 212.

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said just to become aware of future events without any dream. *Abakunguluka* are distinguished from those who suffer from fits or fall into trances (*abakom' amalago*), but a woman in a trance may also prophesy and induce the chief and priests to celebrate a ritual, for it is thought that she too is in communication with the shades. Men say 'The shade has entered her' or 'Kyala catches hold of her that she may speak of the matter'. This type of prophecy is something new among the Nyakyusa. Mwandisi (107) told us that 'it did not exist in BuKinga whence we came', but had been introduced from the south, through Ngonde, and it is mainly confined to women, whereas the *abakunguluka* are men.

There are many tales of famous prophecies. Nsamba (90) claimed that his father (63) foretold that 'there will come a white thing on the Lake, and it will land on the shore. That will be the man who will make peace', and Mwakalinga (142) who died fighting the Germans is said to have foretold his own death.[1]

Dreams and revelations of the possessed concerning public matters are reported to the local village headman and referred to the other headmen and priests, and a prophecy is accepted as valid only after formal discussion. As we shall see, Kasitile was sceptical about the revelations of one man who was repeatedly 'possessed', perhaps because he threatened to become a rival in interpreting public misfortune. If there is doubt, suspicions are confirmed or problems elucidated, by divination.

When they judged a sacrifice necessary the village headman and priests went to their chief saying, 'We do not sleep', and it was his obligation to secure an animal for sacrifice. He might provide it out of his own herd, but very often the duty of 'finding' sacrificial cattle was delegated to a junior line—the ruling chief gave cattle to a younger brother charging him and his heirs with the function of providing sacrificial cattle when necessary. Today all the chiefs are reluctant to expend cattle on rituals whose validity is questioned, and there is often friction between the senior and junior lines over who should 'find' the cow or bull required. Their reluctance is illustrated by the following passage from Godfrey Wilson's diary:

> *Mwaya (on the lake shore)*: 22/12/34
> It is still stormy; there has been wind and heavy rain for four days. People are saying: 'We are hungry. It is very bad. We need light rain

[1] According to Mr. Harkin's informant the Saraboe eruption was foretold a year before it occurred. *Tanganyika Notes and Records*, 40 (1955), p. 61.

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for planting, but now all the fields are muddy, we can neither hoe nor plant.' Five days ago there was no rain but locusts, and people did not plant for fear lest the locusts should eat the rice and maize as it sprouted. Kissoule tells me: 'Kyala is very angry. . . . Mwandisi (107, the priest-chief) wants to pray to put things right, he has sent Mwalulabosya to ask Mwakisisile (170, the ruling chief) for a cow. Mwalulabosya and Mwakalobo went and the chief agreed saying: "I have not got one now, but I will look for one!" Then Mwalulabosya sent me (Kissoule) to fetch it, but the chief refused saying: "I am busy now." Then Mwandisi (107), who is blind and infirm, went himself, but still there is no cow.'

The priests who minister to dead chiefs, like the priests of Lubaga, are of different types. The senior village headmen of a dead chief are responsible for conducting sacrifices at his grove in co-operation with his heir, and when a headman dies his office is taken over by his heir. Where a grove is much honoured this continues for generations and the heirs of one of the village headmen become hereditary keepers of the grove, each incumbent of the office assuming his name. Secondly, there are chiefs of a junior line, who become hereditary priests on whom the ruling chiefs depend for their prayers, but these priest-chiefs do not actually attend the sacrifices; the celebration is delegated to commoner priests and junior kinsmen. Mwandisi (107) mentioned above, Kasitile (86) and Nsamba (90) were all priest-chiefs of this sort. Kasitile prayed at his own home, blowing out water before any celebration in Mwaipopo's country, and he was given the chine of any animal sacrificed on behalf of the country. If this were not done 'all the cattle in the country would die . . . it is the most important part of the meat'. The commoner priests who conducted the ritual always shared the head of the sacrificial beast and the breast went to the chief. With priest-chiefs, as with commoner chiefs, the name of the first incumbent of the office (or an early and famous incumbent) may become a hereditary title, e.g. three generations of priests in Selya have been known as *Kasitile*.

The essential elements in the ritual are: the sacrifice of a black bull or cow in the grove; the offering up of the blood and pieces of the sacred meat from the forelegs, together with the beer, on the earth close to a sacred stone and near a sacred tree; an invocation calling on the shades to come and feast, and petitions for rain, fertility, and health. One piece of meat is thrown down for

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769 each name mentioned: 'We give this meat to you so-and-so.'
[782] 'May the children sleep, may we all sleep, may it rain, may there be much food, may milk be plentiful.' Then follows a communion in which young 'grand-children' of the dead share the sacred meat and beer. 'The shades eat together, they break off firewood
[775] there from the tree, they rejoice, some clap their hands to give thanks.' Finally, a hut is built for the shades and half-formed bananas and sweet milk are left in it to 'ripen'. It was thought that if the sacrifice were accepted they did so miraculously quickly and the milk increased in quantity, the bananas in size. Among the Kukwe a white and grey cock and a hen were offered as well as the cow or bull. An account of two of the sacrifices we attended will make this clearer.

(*b*) SACRIFICE TO MWAIJONGA

769 In July 1935, two days after the Kinga had sacrificed at
782 Lubaga (*vide supra*, p. 30), the chief Mwaipopo (116) came to tell us that he was going to sacrifice at the grove of his father, Mwaijonga (82). Ngulyo, heir to Mwaijonga's second senior headman and now his priest, came with the chief, and he remarked,

> Kasitile (86) summoned us some time ago. He and Njobakosa and Kissogota[1] and I thought that the hunger was very great indeed, and Kasitile sent us to tell Mwaipopo (116) to look for a cow and sacrifice. Then Mwaipopo agreed, because the hunger is indeed very great; he has not yet found the cow; when he has, we shall inform Kasitile and then kill it in Mwaijonga's grove.

Mwaipopo 'found' the cow at once for next morning Kasitile told us

> Mwambene (Mwaipopo, 116) came with Ngulyo yesterday to say he had found the cow. This evening, after sunset, because there is a moon (second quarter) I shall pray at my place with water; and Mwaipopo will pray at his homestead also with water. Tomorrow morning they will kill the cow. I shall not be there—I never go—I stay at home and they [i.e. the shades] find me at home.

The same evening (10 July 1935) Godfrey Wilson went to Kasitile's homestead just after sunset. Kasitile took a calabash cup
[778] hanging under the eaves saying: 'No one ever drinks from this cup, it is for praying only. At my death it will go to my heir to use for prayer.' He filled the cup from his wife's water-pot, and then

[1] Heirs of two other village headmen of Mwaijonga, also priests of his grove.

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plunged into it a glowing brand from the fire. Then he went to a low tree in the middle of a cultivated field where the byre of his senior brother (85) had been. He took a root of 'blessed grass' with him, and as he stood before the tree he took a couple of bites of the root and two sips of water. Then he blew out the water in a cloud twice and he spoke for twenty minutes and mentioned thirty-five names or more: 'Thou Mwakanjoki (60), . . . thou Kalesi (18), Mwakalebela (19), . . . Mwakirisya (56) and Mwampondele (27), . . . Kikungubeja, Silobwike, Kyamba Kitali, Nsyanigwa,[1] . . . Mwaipaja (21.) He talked about the punishment of 'Mwakagile their child' (i.e. of Mwaipopo (116) who was here identified with his grandfather) . . . 'Kyala is there . . . he sees Mwaipopo. He says "Do this ritual, I am rejoiced".' At another point Kasitile added the name 'Jesus' to a list of ancestors. He prayed for food, children, and cattle. . . . 'Give us bananas, millet, maize, may children be born in the morning and in the evening, may cows calve in the morning and in the evening.' He spoke of the old sacrifices of Mwalubange (58) and others which had been accepted . . .

Now Mwaipopo has found a cow, he has learnt his lesson, he has agreed; receive him tomorrow, grant him food, give food to all in Selya . . . to Mwaisumo (62), Mwaitende (61). . . . You are proud (*uli namatingo*) to send so much hunger. . . . When I went down to the plain men asked me 'Are you taking all the food with you?' I said 'Yes', but now I have come up, the earth has come up. You alone remain and hold back. I ask you to send food again. I alone remain of all the contemporaries of Mwaijonga (82). I alone am Kasitile. All the people of Kyungu (16), of Mwakyusa (38), all know I am Kasitile. I alone remain. The birds say, the snakes say that I am Kasitile. There is trouble all round in BuNdali, BuSangu, BuKinga, but we thought here there would be no trouble in the country of Mwakilima (111) and Mwanjala (77), but there is. They have sacrificed, the Kinga have come to Lubaga. Mwakisisya (111) has begun, Mwakagile [i.e. Mwaipopo, 116, here identified with his grandfather, 59] sleeps with hunger, receive him tomorrow. I 'treat' the earth, all treat their earth, all over the country.

Next morning early the chiefs and priests met near Mwaijonga's grove which is some hundreds of yards from Ipinda, his senior village, where his *indola* tree still stands.[2] The talk turned on the

[1] These four are the Kinga priests with hereditary titles, who serve at Lubaga.

[2] Why the grave was not beside the *indola* tree as it usually is was not made clear to us.

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769 782 weather, and the ritual. 'We prayed yesterday at Ipinda, Mwaipopo and all of us, we prayed and prayed. Did you feel the cold as much as usual last night? Did you hear the banana leaves rustle as usual?' 'No.' 'Well, Kyala has heard our prayer.'

At 7.45 a.m. they moved into the grove. A black cow had already been killed. 'We killed it at cock-crow, while it was still dark, we were all there. Mwambene (the chief Mwaipopo 116) handed the axe to Mwanyoso (his junior kinsman *vide* p. 84) who killed the cow.' Bananas were brought and all roasted them and ate,
[578] waiting for the other priests, Njobakosa and Kissogata. After a discussion about certain persons who had not come because the last time they got no meat, one of them said: 'Don't talk of what is
[784] forbidden in the sacred grove, don't let's make a noise; no, we pray to Mwakagile (59). . . . If we quarrel and make a noise the shades will not hear our prayer.' James (119), Kasitile's heir, was there but not Kasitile (86) himself. Someone asked whether Tandale ought to be summoned. But one said: 'We have never asked this Tandale to come here; we used to ask his father.[1] . . . Tandale lives in the boys' village. He has not the position of Ngulyo and Kissogota,'

Mwaipopo: 'Why do you argue about this today and not before?'

After an hour's delay Njobakosa arrived, and shortly after him Kissogota, who apologized, saying: 'I am late because my child has just died.'

Kissogota and Ngulyo flayed the cow, letting the blood pour out on to the ground. There was some discussion over the division of the meat, and they cut out the chine, saying: 'We send it with the tail to Kasitile—if we sever the tail we have spoiled it.'

Ngulyo took the sacred meat (*isyammapa*) from both forelegs,
[778] and with Kissogota's help he chopped off twenty-three small pieces. The rest of this meat was left for the children. At 10.10 all gathered to go to the grave. A sacred stone (*ulufiga*)[2] was found under a tree. Mwaiteteja (Mwaipopo's junior kinsman) cleared the undergrowth with his bill-hook and dug a hole close to the stone, then he threw the meat which Kissogota was holding on two leaves, placed the leaves on top and filled in the earth. Five or six men spoke:

[1] Tandale the senior had buried the previous chief, Mwaipopo I (115).

[2] It was not clear whether this was the one planted at Mwajonga's coming out or not, since his *indola* was some hundreds of yards away.

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Here is your cow, your food. We pray to Kyala. May theft go away. Give us food and beans and millet, may we eat and be satisfied. . . . It is said that the sweet potatoes are scarce now, help us. You Mwakabule (117), Mwakomo (112). . . . This is your cow Mwaijonga (82). This is your meat. I shall seek another also which we shall give you like this. 769 782

NGULYO: May the locusts go away. It is you who have caused theft because there is hunger.

KISOOOTA: At night since we eat scraps of food our bellies are disquieted . . . may we be satisfied. People are eating millet porridge;[1] when food is plentiful they say it's horrible. When someone eats millet porridge he dies, it kills a man. We pray to him, this Kyala, because we do not know him, so we say: 'You Mwaijonga (82) drive away the hunger. Give all of us, Mwaipopo's people, food, and hear us all.' [262]

Mwaipopo's young sons (not the older ones) ate the rest of the sacred meat (*vide* plate 8). Other boys who approached were chased away: 'They thought because their friends were getting meat they would too.' Then the remainder of the carcass was divided: two legs went to the chiefs, two to the commoners, the chine to Kasitile, the breast to Mwaipopo (the chief) who gave half to his sons and half to his daughters—his wives may not eat it. The head went to the priests Ngulyo and his fellows—and some entrails were sent to Seba, widow of Mwaijonga (82). There was some discussion about the disposal of the head: 'Let it be put in Ngulyo's house', they said. Mwaipopo commenting later, explained: [262]

We leave the head in the house of a commoner near the sacred grove in order that the shades can come and eat it. So also with the chine. . . . Kasitile leaves it so that his shades may eat it. We throw the meat by a tree which was planted long ago. He whom we have buried looks towards it, he sits facing the tree and the meat is thrown beside it.[2] He sees the meat we throw. We offer the meat of the upper forelegs (*ijammapa*), this is the sacred meat, the rest we eat ourselves. The blood pours out on to the ground, it goes beneath, which means that the owners, the shades, receive it, because they are beneath. The shades say: 'We are angry because you have not given us cows to treat the grove, we are angry and send this hunger. Treat the grove frequently!' [775]

Kasitile also discussed the ritual with us later and he remarked:

[1] Millet is ordinarily used only for brewing beer. The Nyakyusa regard millet porridge as very distasteful and eat it only during extreme scarcity. [273]

[2] We omitted to ask why, in this case, a hut had not been built in the grove.

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769 782 I kept the chine for two nights in my house. The shades came to eat—they left practically nothing. Had I not been ill I would have asked you to come and see since you say they do not eat. . . . The shades come and see that we are celebrating the rituals.

[793] [643] [123] The whole ritual was esoteric. Only the chief with eight of his agnatic kinsmen, four of his young sons (but not his grown-up heir or young grandson), and four priests participated, and we two anthropologists were permitted to look on. Peeping small boys were chased off. The shades were addressed in a conversational tone and, except during the invocation, the priests and [784] chiefs chatted to one another, but arguments and raised voices were taboo. The boys who ate the meat were told:

[869] See, we your fathers are sacrificing, we are making plenty of food. Follow the custom of your fathers when it is your turn to sacrifice. Learn how to do it.

The same evening Kasitile prayed at his tree again. He explained:

I would not usually pray at all tonight, it is finished. Mwaipopo and I prayed yesterday, today the ritual is finished, but that boy of mine [his heir, 119] does not visit me, he's not been to see me and he did not tell me that he was going to the ritual. . . . I am going to pray to tell my fathers not to be startled, to tell them I am not angry, to tell them to send only a little rain, not a lot, to tell them to accept the sacrifice.

He went to the same place, and chewed the root of 'blessed grass' and blew out water as before. He prayed to about thirty persons, especially to Mwamaloba (85, his elder brother) and Mwakanjoki (60, his father), and also to Mwakagile (59), Mwaijonga (82), Mwaipasi (81), Mwakabule (117), Mwamwifu (84), Mwafungo (83), Mwakipesile (118), Mwakapala (?), Lyambilo (12), Mwalubange (58), Mwamukinga (43), Mwaihojo (147?), Mwaitende (61), and Kyala (2). No mention was made of the Lubaga chiefs this time, or of sons of Mwaipaja (21) or of 'Jesus'.

You have received your child Mwakagile (116, identified with his grandfather 59), Mwaijonga (82), you have received the chief, this boy of mine (119) is quarrelling with me, do not be upset, he is a fool, a fool, but let him be . . . go and call your brothers to eat, you Mwaijonga (82), you Mwaipopo (115), and all your younger brothers; call Mwakagile (59) and Mwakanjoki (60) . . . Mwalubange (58) go to eat with your younger brother, let us find food, millet, bananas, children, milk . . . let there be a little rain only, not too much . . . people believe

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that I can speak, that when I speak food comes tomorrow; let it be so. 769

Three points call for comment here. First, it will be noted that if the crops failed Kasitile had a scapegoat in his heir who was quarrelling with him. The sacrifice was performed correctly but a quarrel between any of the leading actors could destroy its efficacy, and Kasitile made it clear that he was being very forbearing with a difficult 'son'. 769 782

Secondly, a great many names were mentioned in the prayers, but they were not mentioned in any discernible order. This is obvious if the prayers are compared with the genealogy facing p. 3 And since Kasitile was a famous priest, acknowledged to be an expert in ritual and tradition we must conclude that the order was not thought important: all that was required was to mention the names of dead members of the lineage, including even one (Mwakabule 117) who was junior both to Mwaipopo and Kasitile who were sacrificing. [793]

Thirdly, what did Kasitile imply by his reference to the moon? (p. 74). We omitted to ask Kasitile himself, but a number of informants insisted that there is no necessary connexion between the celebration of a ritual and the phases of the moon. However, rain is expected with the *waning* moon, therefore rituals which are intended to produce rain are usually performed with the waning moon, and the sacrifice to Mwaijonga in which sun and warmth were sought, was performed with the waxing moon. This may or may not be what Kasitile had in mind. 769 782 821

Everyone agreed afterwards that the rituals had been effective for the weather grew slightly warmer. Before the sacrifice at Lubaga on 7th July, the temperature was 62° F. at sunset, but from the 9th onward the cloud cleared, and by the 14th the sunset temperature was 68° F. Whether or not the Kinga priests living high on their mountains with a view down the Lake whence storms come are weatherwise, and time their visits carefully, we do not know. Certainly any change in the weather after a celebration is interpreted as a direct answer to prayer. [132]

(*c*) SACRIFICE TO MWAKISAMBWE

A month later a sacrifice was made to Mwaijonga's great-great-grandfather Mwakisambwe (30) in the grove Mbyanga. The chief Mwaipopo was not concerned this time, but the senior line of Mwaihojo (147) and a junior line who had traditionally the responsibility of providing cows for celebrations at Mbyanga. 769 782

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769 782 Mwalukuta, the hereditary priest of Mbyanga, had been pressing the chiefs to sacrifice for some time. He had sent messengers in March, April, May, and again in July, saying: 'At Mbyanga things have gone back, it is bad, see hunger kills!' At last, in August, Mwaihojo agreed to provide a cow if Mwaitende of the junior line finally refused. Mwalukuta, the priest of the grove, ex- [793] plained:

> We went to Mwaitende (121, identified with his grandfather 61) and asked him to sacrifice. He said: 'No, I am not coming; do the work there at Mbyanga yourselves.' We said: 'Why do you refuse to come, to return a cow? Our grandfathers gave you a cow, why don't you return it? They gave you cows on the understanding that you would bring them back, one by one, and kill them in the sacred grove here. Why do you refuse to return them?' It has always been the custom for the junior brothers to find cows for sacrifice. Their seniors give them wealth and appoint them priests to bring cattle to the sacred grove. [177] But in European times they refuse to come, each man kills at his own place. . . . I must go and tell Kasitile (86) and also Kifubuka, or rather his son—the father refuses to come he had a lawsuit with Kasitile. . . . Kifubuka used to kill the cow, then Kasitile said Makuli should kill the cow, but now Makuli has refused to come so I go to fetch Kifubuka [the younger]. Makuli was a chief who ate the meat. . . . Mwaitende (61) used to send the cow to him and Mwaluseke to bring to Mbyanga . . . as he now refuses to send the cow they say: 'What should we bring?' and have refused to come here.

[132] There had been another spell of cold weather and the temperature on the night of 8th August was down to 59° F., but fine weather was visibly approaching from the Lake. On the 9th the ritual was to have been held, but not everyone had been formally summoned and it was put off to the 10th.

[793] Only eight men came, Mwalukuta I, the priest of the grove, and his younger brother Mwalukuta II, two other priests (Nyama and Mwakasukula) and Mwakyonde (148), younger brother of Mwaihojo the chief who provided the cow, and three other young men of the chief's lineage. One of the young chiefs was [291] wearing a red cloth and was scolded by Mwakyonde for doing so: 'It's taboo in the sacred grove.' 'Why?' 'Because it's like a rainbow.'[1] And he took it off.

The mother of Nyama brought a bundle of saplings for building the hut for the shade, and Kisisile, the senior wife of Mwaihojo the

[1] The rainbow is a symbol of misfortune. cf. p. 60.

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chief, brought a bundle of firewood. Mwalukuta I was not expected to enter the grove and he went off soon. His brother and Nyama took a little basket of maize and millet. The chiefs stayed on the edge of the grove and the three commoners entered alone. Mwalukuta II and Nyama built a little hut five feet from the 'grave' with the saplings brought by Nyama's mother. 'We put firewood and food and a little calabash which we have prepared in it, it's for the shades.' The calabash contained millet, maize, pumpkin seeds, ground nuts, and cow peas; and a stem of bananas was put beside it. Mwalukuta swept the 'grave' which was marked by a few small trees, and Mwakasukula killed the cow, which must lie facing east to BuKinga. Mwalukuta spoke the invocation: 'Thou Mwakisambwe (30) . . . Mwakihaba (45) has gone back, but Mwamukinga (44) is here still. . . . Mwakihaba says, "I am no longer a relative, I have gone out." ' Then they took the sacred meat from the forelegs of the cow: that from the right leg was buried near the 'grave', that from the left by an *nkuju* tree (a species of *ficus*) forty paces away. The priests ate some roasted meat and intestines with bananas, and the rest of the meat was divided between them and the chiefs. The head went to Nyama's house and was kept for three nights. The priests explained that they are forbidden to bathe for three days or lie with their wives, but on the fourth day they eat the head and after that they bathe and resume married life.

Eighteen days after the sacrifice Mwalukuta went to look and found the stem of bananas which had been left in the little hut had ripened, and the earth on the grave had been disturbed. This was a good omen. But later his legs began to trouble him—he could scarcely walk—and it was said that certain priests who should have been called to the ritual had not been summoned and were angry and had cursed him. He fled to a distance and sought a bull to kill for his fellows.

(*d*) SACRIFICE AT KABALE

The form of sacrifice among the Kukwe is very similar. We never saw a sacrifice at Kabale—our friends assured us that they had been dropped before 1935—but a description by two of the leading priests of the grove of Kabale demonstrates the similarity between the rituals there and in Selya. The only points of difference were that the Kukwe sacrificed fowls as well as cattle, and granddaughters shared the sacred food with grandsons.

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769 782 In this grove of Kabale three chiefs in particular gather together, Mwakilulele (67 K) and his brothers Mwakalukwa (68 K) and Mwangoka (24 K) [or his son], with the younger brothers Mwakamela (66 K) and Mwakilasa (69 K) in whose country the grove is situated. The senior, Mwakilulele, initiates matters; it is he who calls his fellows saying: 'Let us pray in the grove.' Then Mwakilulele seeks a black cow and Mwangoka seeks a black bull, Mwakilasa brews beer and brings two fowls, a black and grey cock, and a black and yellow hen. So they go to the grave with their children, young boys and girls and the junior chiefs who have lost their positions as ruling chiefs—sons of Mwangomale (4 K)—and their village headmen. In the grove they pour [778] some of the beer over the sacred stones and kill the cattle and take the liver and fat round the stomach and the meat from the upper forelegs (*ijammapa*) and cut it into small pieces and put it on two leaves, sweet banana and plantain. Then they take little pieces of meat and throw them on the ground and pluck out the feathers of the fowls. They praise the shades saying: 'Receive the fowls and beer and meat, may there be fertility of the fields that all the crops may be plentiful.' . . . 'Help us Kyala, thou Ndolombwike (?), thou Kajubili (?), you created us, together with our fathers. Help us that illness may be slight, that we may increase and be many, that all the fowls and cattle may increase and that the fields may be fertile.' When they pluck out the feathers of the hen the praises are for the wives of the chiefs who have died. Then they pick up little pieces of meat and eat them with young children; it is taboo for wives to eat it. Boys drink the beer which is in the calabash cup—they receive it in their hands—and the girls finish the beer in the large calabash. Then the men drink the rest of the beer and divide the meat. . . . The calabash cup and the large calabash and the head are left in the grove overnight . . . then the large calabash [784] and the cup are taken home and hung under the eaves—it is taboo to put them in the house—women must not approach them. When they have finished and come out of the grove rain pours down immediately and they rejoice saying: 'Kyala has helped us' . . . or 'the fathers have heard'.

Pouring out the beer on the ground and throwing down little pieces of meat, and sticking feathers into the ground means: 'May the fathers beneath receive them, may they bless the crops so that they flourish and food be plentiful. . . .' Children finish the food because they are like the shades—when the children have eaten they say the shades have eaten. They roast the meat at a distance because if they roast it close to the place of sacrifice no shades come there for the smoke drives them off. . . . The large calabash and cup and head which stay there [778] [784] symbolize fertility (*mboto*), so that when we eat they may help us and the food may not fail. The taboo on women—wives—eating the sacrificial meat (the *ijammapa*) and drinking the beer in the calabash

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and cup is because this food is sacrified to their fathers-in-law. Those who are not sons of Ngomale do not drink the sacrificial beer or eat the meat either, because they are of other lineages. A *black* cow is used in the grove because groves are always fearful and darkness falls if something improper is done. So it is said that the blackness of the cow matches the fearfulness (*ubuniya*) of the grove.

Besides the sacrifices at Kabale and to their more immediate ancestors, Kukwe chiefs sent offerings to the BaNgumba, earlier occupants of the country. Mwamunda explained:

My grandfather prayed in the grove which is across the river on mission land, in the forest; it was the grove of us BaNgumba; we were owners of the soil, the Kukwe chiefs found us here. If ever a chief sent my grandfather and his fellows to pray there they went with an unripe stem of bananas, and sweet milk, and unripe maize, and small sweet potatoes; then they prayed and came home again and the next day, when they went to look they found the stem of bananas had ripened, the maize had hardened, the milk was thick and the sweet potatoes large; everything which was unripe had ripened. Then they said Kyala [that is Kyala and the shades] had stood by us. . . . We spoke of Kyala even before the Europeans had come. . . .[1]

They say that very long ago we BaNgumba, we sons of Kasyapula, had not yet got fire, the chiefs brought it. It is this they commemorate in the 'coming out' ritual. We, the owners of the soil, were always here, the chiefs came and built, and when others came the firstcomers fled. They are like you Europeans who fight wars; we owners of the soil think only of hoeing.

(*e*) MODERN CHANGES

It is quite clear that, though sacrifices to the heroes and at the groves of chiefs were still made while we were among the Nyakyusa (and more frequently than our friends at first admitted), the cycle was attenuated. Not only had human sacrifice probably ceased but the chiefs were reluctant to part with cattle. . . . Kasitile (86) said one day:

Since you [Europeans] came into the country the rituals have disappeared. Mwaipopo (116) never thinks of the rituals now. . . . It is cold and there is hunger; I went to Mwaipopo and told him to tell his

[1] According to the records of the first missionaries, sacrifices on Rungwe were to *Mbumba* but the same passage refers to *Mbumba or Kiala* meaning God. It is not clear whether the two names were equated by Kukwe informants or by the missionary himself, who was in touch with missionaries elsewhere in the district. (*Journal de l'Unité des Frères*, 1894.) I am indebted to the Reverend Paul Fueter for drawing my attention to this valuable Journal.

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priests to sacrifice to his father and elder brother so that fertility may return and men may eat sweet potatoes, but he does nothing.

A conversation between Kasitile and Mwanyoso, his fellow priest (*vide* p. 76), was also instructive on this point:

> The soil has changed, we are not like those of old, we are different. Mwakisambwe (30) had power; when he prayed the thunder crashed and rain fell in torrents. In the old days when the Kinga came they came with drums and we all feared them, what they said was done—they did not have to say much—just a few words and it was done. But now they spend all their time explaining things and talking and we do not do anything. . . .
>
> MWANYOSO: I have sent people time and again to Mwaijande (?) for a cow, but he just insults us. . . . I have asked Mwaihojo (147) about celebrating. . . .
>
> KASITILE: What did he say?
>
> MWANYOSO: I don't know . . . if he is wise . . .
>
> KASITILE (*breaking in*): Well, you had better admit that the chiefs do not respect you—the chiefs say: 'It is European times now.'
>
> G.W.: What do they fear? The Government does not affect the ritual, does it?
>
> KASITILE: They are unwilling to part with the cows which I take for sacrifice, they do not like to lose their cows. In the old days they feared, and when we said: 'We do not sleep, celebrate in the grove', they agreed quickly, for they feared that we, their men, would move to another chiefdom.

(*f*) THE FIRST FRUITS

769 782 [241] [793] [178]

No communal ritual of the first fruits is celebrated among the Nyakyusa as in Ngonde,[1] but after the millet harvest a little grain is collected from every homestead and later brewed into beer which is offered to the shades of the chief. In Mwaipopo's country the offerings of millet were collected by the priest, Ngulyo, who, with his colleagues Kissogoia and Njobakosa, took it to Kalinga, senior widow of the late chief (119). She was custodian of a sacred pot inherited by the chief from his predecessors, in which the offerings of millet are stored, and this is the pot which, according to some informants, also contained the power of growth—the nails and hair torn from the dead chief (*vide supra*, pp. 64-5). When the new crop was reaped Kalinga almost emptied the pot, refilled it with the fresh grain, and brewed beer with the old. There had once been a sacred winnowing basket used in preparing the beer, but

[1] Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde*, p. 42.

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it was stolen by Ngoni raiders. When the brewing was ripe, the chief sought a calabash of curds and Kalinga cut a stem of bananas, and the priests ate and drank in her hut, together with junior kinsmen of the chief's family, but not the chief himself. As they drank they prayed: 769 782

Oh thou Mwakagile (59) give us millet, may it be plentiful, and may the milk be plentiful and may the bananas grow.

One pot of beer was due to Kasitile, the priest, and he would leave it overnight in his house.

The shades come and drink a lot, only a little beer is left in the morning. . . . then the bananas flourish and there is much fertility in the homesteads. . . . The sacred pot gives fertility of the soil to the whole country. [775] [778]

A very bitter quarrel flared up while we were in Selya because Kasitile came upon Ngulyo and his colleagues drinking the sacred beer without their having sent him his pot, or even notifying him of the brewing. The repercussions of this are discussed in chapter IX. [578]

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system is still the accepted form in Mwaipopo's chiefdom; the advantages of separating kinsmen in different villages are explicitly stated, and the contrast between the Nyakyusa and their neighbours in this respect emphasized. 'Certainly we do not live with kinsmen here but the Kinga do.' 'It is not good for a son to live close to his father, they will quarrel.' 'When we move to another village we consider friendship not kinship in selecting it.'

(*b*) THE BALANCE BETWEEN GENERATIONS AND SECTIONS

The ritual cycle of the 'coming out' and the sacrifices in the groves helped to maintain a balance of power between generations, as well as between chiefs and commoners. At the 'coming out' of Mwanyilu (177) in 1955 it was Mwabuputa, the senior village headman of his father, who took the leading part. He was described as 'the greatest man in the country' who 'brings out the chief' and his manner indicated that he was well aware of his power. During the reign of Mwaipopo (116) the power of his father's village headmen, Njobakosa and Ngulyo, was apparent at every ritual. Spiritual power was shared between chiefs and commoners, but exercised ideally by a virile chief of the ruling generation and the experienced headmen of the retired generation.

Those chosen as senior village headmen at the 'coming out' are commonly older than the young chief, but village headmen are thought of as surviving their chief—it is they who were responsible for smothering him, and performing the sacrifices in his grove. The headmanship is an office and so long as the office is necessary an incumbent is found for it, in the person of the heir of the original holder who is so closely identified with the deceased that most precise inquiry is often necessary to establish whether a given individual is the original holder, the succeeding heir, or a later heir, successor to the successor. The Ngulyo who officiated at the rituals in 1955 was the heir of the original Ngulyo (some said the *grandson*, not the son) and he was criticized by Kasitile as being 'a young man who knew nothing'. The principle, so familiar in Central Africa, of a perpetual office[1] emerges, among the

[1] I. Cunnison, *Kinship and Local Organization on the Luapula*, Communications of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute No. 5 (1950), pp. 14-15; J. C. Mitchell, *The Yao Village*, Manchester (1956), p. 101; A. I. Richards, *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia*, O.U.P. (1939), p. 94; 'Some Types of Family Structure among the Central Bantu', in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, p. 215; J. Roscoe, *The Baganda*, London (1911), p. 3.

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Nyakyusa, when sacrifices are continued in the grove of a dead chief such as Mwakisambwe (30), for an indefinite number of generations, and the heirs of his senior village headmen serve as his priests, taking the name of the first holder of the office. Most of the priests of Lubaga hold perpetual titles of this sort. The conception of the *corporation sole* is familiar enough in the western tradition, but European observers in Africa are sometimes confused by the use of a personal name and the almost complete identification of each holder with his predecessors, as well as by the practice of treating certain kinship relationships as if they were offices.

Generation was determined among the Nyakyusa by association with a chief. There was no name for those who 'came out' together other than that of their chief, who was the focus of the ritual. On the other hand, however, a 'coming out' concerned a whole generation, and it could not be held out of season. If the heir died he was replaced by a brother, as were Mwaipopo I (115) and Mwankuga I (130). If a chief had no male heir of the right age in his senior house his daughter might represent an heir. For example, at the coming out of the sons of Mwaijonga, it was a *girl* Ijonga (114) who performed the leading part in the ritual which fell due before the birth of Mwaipopo I (115). When Mwaipopo I was born and grew up he assumed office, but he died young and was replaced by his younger brother without a further celebration. Because the 'coming out' was thus linked to the maturity of a whole generation we have felt some confidence in assigning approximate dates to the arrival of the heroes. The period between each 'coming out' we estimate at thirty to thirty-five years, though the higher figure is probably more nearly correct. There must in fact have been some flexibility in the timing of the 'coming out' to account for the differences in the number of generations of ruling chiefs in different segments of the lineage. Some of the differences may be due to errors (e.g. it is possible that 70 is an elder brother not the father of 98, and that a generation has been omitted between Mwakapeje (54) and Mwakaje (75), but even where there is little possibility of error the number of generations does not always tally.

In theory a man always belongs to the generation succeeding that of his father, irrespective of his age, provided he has not inherited from a man of the previous generation and taken his status, but in practice, since men often have sons of very different

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CHAPTER VII

CLEANSING THE COUNTRY

769 SACRIFICES to the heroes and the shades of the chiefs are holy and private—only a handful of priests and chiefs may enter the groves and the details of the rituals are not discussed with other people. But there are other celebrations in which everyone 776 participates; these are the rituals for cleansing the community— 783 'throwing out the rubbish' (*ukujola ifikungu*)—more specifically the *ashes* from all the hearths.

In Ngonde the cleansing is organized for the whole kingdom, from Mbande, but among the Nyakyusa each chiefdom acts *independently*. Traditionally, we were told, the *ukujola ifikungu* was an annual celebration, observed at the 'new year', after the break of the rains, but it could also take place if there were much sickness in the country, or plague, or prophecies of evil to come. It was celebrated (in an attenuated form and by a section of the community only) in Ngonde in July 1937, to cleanse the country of a plague of rats, and in September of the same year a somewhat similar ritual was performed in Porokoto's chiefdom because a [787] fearful omen had been seen—a ground hornbill had eaten a [788] chicken. The annual celebrations had been dropped both in Ngonde and BuNyakyusa before 1935.

As has been shown in the *Rituals of Kinship* the Nyakyusa believe [769] that too close an association with the shades is dangerous; all the [755] family rituals are designed to drive them away, to drive them out of the bodies of the mourners, or menstruating girls, or parents of twins; and the purpose of 'throwing out the ashes' in all the homesteads is essentially the same. The shades 'come to warm 783 themselves' at the hearths of their descendants, they 'bring sickness [778] to the hearths' and so the old ashes are cleared out and new fire is lighted. The phrase *ukujola ifikungu* is used in Ngonde for clearing out the litter (*ulufumbo*) after a burial, or an initiation ritual, and for shaving after a ritual, as well as for clearing the ashes from all the hearths in the country.

[759] It is also thought that domestic fires are contaminated by [775] witches who may have cooked the human flesh they steal over their victims' own fires. In Ngonde it was the connexion between

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796 Penja chief, Mwalukasa. He called all his people because he heard that
783 smallpox was coming and said: 'Let us pray.' And he called his fellow
chiefs, those of the same lineage, and said: 'Let this illness not come,
753 may it go to other chiefs. . . . Listen! I am the chief! We have heard
that smallpox is approaching, who is here who rejoices at his approach?
Who is here who wishes that it should kill us?'

THE CHIEFS: We, we do not rejoice that it is coming, we reject it, chief Mwalukasa, may it pass by this homestead.

THE COMMONERS: And we also reject it, may it pass by our homesteads.

MWALUKASA: And I, I reject it, may smallpox not come into our country. If there be one who has relatives in a chiefdom where there is smallpox and they come to call him to a funeral let them stay at a distance, and not sleep here, let him not go near until the illness has passed by, at the end of the year. If you witches go to fetch it, you will kill your
[754] fellows with whom you are chatting now. You will not enjoy my company or build with me, the chief, if you go and bring in smallpox and kill your fellows. We pray that it may pass. [For it is believed in this country that the witches go to bring in illness, or wild animals, from a distance.]

THE COMMONERS: Yes, indeed, may it pass by.

MWALUKASA: If you go to bury a brother in a country in which there is smallpox stand afar off, tie the cow you bring to a tree and call to them: 'Here is my cow for killing, come and take it.' Take your cow, but do not go into the homestead.

And the people did as he said. Then he told them to get ready for the ritual. He took his calabash cup and three other chiefs with
● [749] calabash cups followed him. They blew water and prayed to Kyala and the shades. Then the people were gathered together; and the chiefs, led by Mwalukasa, ran round facing each group in turn and blowing out water towards them; the men held their shields in front of them and when the chiefs blew they shook their shields violently, as if fighting.

When all was finished then Mwalukasa said: 'When you go home,
[372] throw out the ashes and the fires; all make new fire with drills.' And they all did this.

Finally he had bamboos planted with medicine on the main roads between BuPenja and BuKukwe and BuPenja and BuNyiha. No one
[755] ill with smallpox, or who had lived in contact with smallpox, was allowed to pass, unless he had been ill and recovered. I saw the one bamboo clump on the boundary of Nyiha and Penja country. No one passed it, it was very fearsome (*lutiya fye*).

As in cultivation there was a combination of ritual and science.

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787 753 clearly inclined to the shades as it had before the divination, but as before the certain conviction was lacking.

Four days later (12/2/37) Kasitile went to Nesa in Kitali village to consult the oracle again 'for that of Nzuki went wrong'. He told us afterwards 'This oracle supported the finding of Ndembwe's. It said: [775] [769] Your kinsman who is dead *is* angry; he says, "Why did you not celebrate the ritual? I am tired of the hair (*Ngaisle nayo isumbi*). And what did you offer your father after cutting that tree?" ' Here yet another cause of Kasitile's illness is suggested—the neglect of the death ritual of a kinsman. The implication is that the chief mourners have [765] [302] not yet performed the concluding rite of shaving which makes it possible for the deceased to join his fathers. The hair which the mourners shave off is called 'the hair of the corpse'.

QUESTION: What are you going to do then?

[688] [602] KASITILE: I shall charge the young man, son of my dead kinsman, with neglect, and tell him to celebrate the ritual that the shades which have bound me may go out of my body.

QUESTION: And the bull?

KASITILE: If I can find one I shall kill it.

QUESTION: Who will be there?

[793] KASITILE: The priests will be there, Ngulyu, Kisegota, Njobukusa, Mwalukuta and Mwakasukula,[1] and also Mwaipopo (116) himself. Were I a commoner I should kill alone with my younger brothers, but since I am a public personage (*ali akulumba*) the village headmen are there. (To Mwaikambo, the clerk.) It is good at your home in the hills; here things are bad.

QUESTION: But they also have shades?

[775] KASITILE: But they are not important. Look you, I just cut a tree and they have seized me and dwell in my body. Are there sacred groves in [178] the hills? Do men visit them? There in the hills rituals have died; the puberty ritual and the rituals of the groves are celebrated very little.

787 791 753 On 27th March Kasitile looked in to say that he was going to consult a visiting Sangu doctor 'from very far off' about his cough, but G.W. had better not come lest his presence spoil the divination. Kasitile came again after the consultation, full of excitement. 'What a doctor! That is a doctor indeed! That is a diviner! He took an axe and divined with it; he took coppers which I brought and threw them in a little pot, together with the axe, and ash, and he said: "You also take ash and throw it in" and I did so. Then he looked into the little pot and said: "You built on the plain!" He knew this without being told! I said: "Yes".'

SANGU: There was a quarrel there.

[1] The last two are priests of Mbwanga (*vide* p. 81) who did not in fact come. Mwenukundo, Kasitile's assistant, who did come is not mentioned.

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some live coals into a small calabash and held them against Kasitile's chest 'to clear out the blood of coughing'. To pacify the shades a pot of medicines in water was put on the fire; the doctor, Kasitile, and his 'senior wife' (actually her younger sister, as Jane was away) each held the pot with a crooked finger. Then Kasitile and all his wives and children were sprinkled with the hot medicines. And the doctor told Kasitile to sacrifice a bull.

During the following week preparations for the sacrifice went ahead. Kasitile walked for some hours through the forest to call Mwamakunda, his fellow priest who always assisted him in the celebrations at Lubaga and 'sprinkling the country'. Mwamakunda is a very old man, contemporary of Kasitile's father, and he asked: 'Are you bringing your European to the sacrifice?'

KASITILE: Yes.

MWAMAKUNDA: But your father Mwakanjoki (60) did not know any Europeans, he feared them, he died without ever meeting one. After your father died, when your elder brother was alive, Europeans came —Germans—and cut down a tree, the *umuali* tree in the sacred grove near Kamesu; blood gushed out, it shouted so that it was heard in BuKinga.

Kasitile explained that the Germans had wanted timber. Afterwards Mwaipopo (the chief 116) sought a sheep and they tried to put the grove to rights ('close up') by sacrificing it. This was the tree beside which the sacred meat was always put when they sacrificed in the grove. Now one branch has grown up again from the roots.

Mwamakunda went on: 'But you did wrong at the beginning not to take the European to pray, and to tell Mwakanjoki (60) that he should not be afraid, the European has *made himself our friend*.' Kasitile, reporting the interview to us said: 'I concealed that we went together to the grove to pray (*vide supra*, p. 115) and Mwamakunda told me: "Let the European take something, let it stay overnight in the house, and go with him, and pray very much. . . . Mwakanjoki has gone off in a huff from your home, you have offended him yourself. Go with the European, take him to your father's home. Now your father has taken offence, he is shaking your body by night because you cut the tree; you have done wrong." ' I.e. two causes for the anger of the shades and Kasitile's consequent sickness were given: (i) the cutting of the tree by Mwakanjoki's grave and (ii) Godfrey Wilson's presence at rituals and at Kasitile's homestead. So before the sacrifice of expiation for pruning the grove was performed Godfrey Wilson went to be introduced to Kasitile's shades for the second time.

Record of G.W. 5/6/37

In the evening as the sun was setting, I went to Kasitile's house with a cloth and so. He put them in the house, took down the calabash which

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always hangs under the eaves and is only used for prayer, filled it with water and put into it a stone and a live coal from the fire. Then he took some roots from the roof (previously put there ready) and we went off to the same spot as before (*vide supra*, p. 113). Kasitile chewed the root, took water and blew it out, and began to pray:

'Do not be startled, come in your own persons, gather together, with Mwakanjoki (60). You made friends with him before, now he has entered, he has made himself our friend. Indeed I made a mistake, I have come to enter; I cut you on the head, I have done wrong. The sons of Kagile (i.e. 59 + his descendants) complain of me, saying, "It is he who has gone off with the millet, bananas, and maize; and children cry at night behind the huts; we are barren because he has cut Mwakanjoki." I have sought this cow which you wanted. Mwakanjoki (60), Lwembe (37), Mwakalebela (19), Mwatonoka (23), Mwalubanga (58), Mwakagile (59), Mwaijonga (80), Kyala (2), we have come to attend to you (pointing to the grave). Kikungubeja, Nyanigwa Kyamba Kitali,[1] Lyambilo (18) come to your home if you are at Mwalubanga's (58), come if you are at Mwalende's (61), come Mwakanjoki (60) and the Kings and Lwembe (3); Mwakalebela (19) come, give me cattle and millet, and the powerful medicine which you had. Since you are brooding over me go out from my body, go out! I pay my debt. We have come to take you to your home since you have gone off in a huff, come! I will never cut your branches again. I fear you and I will respect the branches. Come to your house, that of Mwamalaba (83), of Kanjoki (mother of 60), come. And he (G.W.) is innocent (*mando*), do not fear him. He is the owner of the ritual, he is Mwamalaba (83), he is my senior, I am the junior. Sometimes I wish to embrace him, sometimes I fear that he is going to imprison me.[2] May the bananas increase! I am left alone! It is I who am here! Move out of my body! And give us medicine! May the offering increase overnight, may the cattle increase and the maize, and in the morning let me tell Mwaipaja (G.W.) that the bananas and medicine have increased. If there is anything else you are a liar, if this chill begins again then I have gone, I am not here. Amen! (*ee*).'

Very early the following morning the sacrificial bull was killed. Kasitile had arranged that our Mohammedan cook should come to cut its throat.[3] Then, later in the morning, the crucial drinking and 'speaking out' began. Kasitile had provided two pots of beer.

[1] Three Kings priests whose names are titles of office.

[2] In the earlier years of our acquaintance Kasitile had desired both the smothering of an ailing chief and human sacrifice for the drum. It is possible that he had consented in either one or both of these ritual acts. He himself reported that the Sangoa diviner had told him: 'You have a European as a close friend. . . . You enjoy his company much, but there is something left . . .' (i.e. the friendship is not yet complete).

[3] Ostensibly so that he could partake of the meat, but the reason given seemed inadequate.

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Round of C.W. 10/4/37

783 782 I was summoned two hours after sunrise and found at Kasitile's: Mwaipopo (the chief 116), Kimegota, Ngulyo, and Njobakasa the commoner priests; Mwamakunda the younger (his father is too weak to come himself), and a half-wit who has attached himself to Kasitile. Mwaipopo asked me: 'Did you escape the rain yesterday evening?' I said, 'No, I was caught by it, I'd come without a coat, and I thought it quite safe as I lived so near' (a quarter of a mile away). Mwaipopo replied: 'Ah, but you were at prayer. Do they not listen? Did you think you would escape the rain when you were at prayer?' and he laughed at me. During the afternoon it began to thunder close by. Kasitile glanced round and whispered to me out of the corner of his mouth: 'They are listening!'

Drinking continued all day, and all day, with intervals, they discussed the case (*atajeka isungwa*) or spoke out (*akuuzye*) or prayed (*akwipasa*). This half formal prayer (*akwipasa*) over beer is an essential part of the ritual. They began by discussing the cutting of the tree by Kasitile. 'They are angry, Mwakanjoki (60) is angry, he is startled that Mwamalaba (i.e. Kasitile 86) cut him himself. Mwakanjoki says, "Who is there?" [i.e. Kasitile did it without formally telling the shades about it]. They (*ate*) went off in a huff . . . we have come to fetch him (*ate*) back.'

[498] [769]

Then Kasitile told them about his prayer and how he had admitted his fault saying: 'Indeed, I, your wife, have done wrong, Mwakanjoki (60), indeed I come to enter, I Mwamalaba (86), I am a woman.' 'If you went to Mwalubanga's (58) come, if you went to Mwalembe's (61) come.' 'Yes,' Kimegota broke in, 'you are a woman, and also you are a man, take the calabash cup and pray. It is you then (who are at fault).' 'Thank you,' said the others, 'thank you Mwakisambwe (Kasitile is identified with his great-grandfather, 30), thank you Mwakaglle (Mwaipopo, 116), is identified with his grandfather, 35), for praying with water.' (Mwaipopo had also prayed at his place.)

So the discussion continued. 'We try everything, a sacred stem of bananas from Kalinga (senior widow of 115) is cut, it goes (to the shades), people milk their cows, they collect millet (*vide* pp. 84-5, 101), we try everything, we try everything.'

Then Mwamakunda started a new topic, the old *umuuli* tree: 'But friends, do you say they have gone away now? They went away long ago. Did this *umuuli* tree fall when Kasitile (86, father of the present one) was alive?' 'When he was dead,' they agreed. 'Well, then, where has your wisdom disappeared to?' 'Yes indeed,' broke in Kasitile, 'Indeed, but we attended to that. They said, "Mwaipopo seek a sheep." They attended to it again. And when I came from the plain, I killed a cow, the meat went there, we attended to it.'

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All the time there was a constant refrain of questioning, especially from Mwamakunda (who as Kasitile's assistant acts as his mouthpiece to the others: 'But why has Mwakanjoki (60) gone off in a huff? Why?' There was a continuous effort to extract reasons. [783] [782]

The meat from the top of the foreleg (*tjammapa*) was cut up into little portions and some was put aside for the boys, sons of Kasitile. Then Kasitile led the way with a bill-hook and Mwamakunda and I followed. Mwamakunda carried the meat in a leaf. We went to the sacred grove, Kinyangwa. When we reached the edge Kasitile told us to wait and he cut a path into the middle with the bill-hook, then we followed. [778]

Mwamakunda threw the meat slowly, piece by piece, into the rotting stump of an old *umuseli* tree, from which a lusty growth had sprung, one shoot being 30 feet high. Kasitile prayed: 'Come Mwakanjoki (60), together with Lwembe (37), Mwakalebela (19), and the Kinga, come, with—with—with—come. We pray of you millet, maize, bananas, all your food.' (Mwamakunda threw a piece of meat at each word.) 'We are still mourning you, we have tears. We finish now, that is all. Bring bananas, bring millet, maize, children, may the cows calve, stand by us Mwakanjoki (60), N—, N—, N— Lwembe (37), Mwakalebela (19), Nyanigwe,[1] Kyamba Kitali,[1] Ngulube (9), N—, N—, N—. Don't come again Mwakanjoki, let us sleep well. This is Mwambaguje [i.e. Mwamakunda the younger. It was his first visit to the sacred grove in place of his father]. I have brought him to you. Do not be startled at this Mwaipaja (G.W.), he is innocent, he is our friend. Move out of my body, let this chill go from my body! We have finished! Amen!' [769]

Kasitile and Mwamakunda gave instructions and suggestions to each other in low voices from time to time during the prayer and throwing of the meat. We went out, Kasitile and Mwamakunda looking ahead, and Kasitile warned me: 'Do not look behind, Mwaipaja.' For the next two days Kasitile said he and Mwamakunda would wash with medicines, and refrain from intercourse with their wives 'because they entered the sacred grove'. [734]

Then we rejoined Mwaipopo and the priests and the meat was cut up. Mwaipopo said: 'Indeed people gossip, where does the whispering go? To whom do the words go? Perhaps they went to you (the commoner) priests?' Kasitile had something on his mind: 'When I returned from Lubaga who came to say: "Thank you, you have arrived back?" [i.e. no one came to greet him formally on his return]. Njobokosa answered this saying that no offence was meant. [689]

Then Njobokosa turned to Mwaipopo (116) and raised the question of his son, Mwaseba (152) who had seduced Mwaipopo's wife, Mpeta. [684]

[1] The hereditary Kinga priests. [793]

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769 775 There is no single supreme power; it lies in the several heroes, in medicines, in witches, and with the shades. Kyala is a hero, a forefather, to whom sacrifices are made, and he is comparable to Lwembe and Kyungu, though he left no direct descendants. The evidence suggests that the names Kyala, Lwembe or Mbasi, Kyungu, and Ngulube were used in the same way in different areas, Kyala being the hero of the north-east shore of the Lake, Kyungu of the north-west, Lwembe of the central Nyakyusa valley, and Ngulube of the scarp edge of the Livingstones. Sometimes informants used Lwembe and Kyala alternatively saying they meant the same thing, although, as we have noted, Lwembe (or Mbasi) was specially associated with cattle, whereas Kyala, who was killed and rose again, only controlled crops, and may perhaps be taken as personifying vegetation. The distinction is in no sense clear-cut, but there is a hint of a cultivating people having [174] been defeated by cattle-keepers with iron weapons, since Kyala was finally killed with a 'razor' (*ubwembe*), and The Razor himself —Lwembe—could not be killed though men tried.

In their creative aspect the heroes and shades are closely identified: 'Kyala creates desire'; 'the shade rouses up in the [842] belly when a woman conceives'; 'Kyala and the shades stand together'. Kasitile said:

> Lwembe . . . makes a child. I lie with a woman; Lwembe is there, he works. Sometimes, if he is angry he works badly and a leg is missing, or the woman has a miscarriage. Sometimes he works well. Lwembe goes about looking upon the mothers; he is in my bellows (i.e. in my wife). It is he who came from BuKinga . . . and wished first to build at Nsamba's (i.e. where Nsamba go now lives). He failed there and went to Kasambala's and failed there and he seized Lubaga. All is his. A child is his and a cow, and the iron which the Kinga make is his, and food is his. . . . He is in a bull and a man. Where do you get the 'blood' (to beget a child)? Are you alone? . . . No, the Kukwe do not know Lwembe, but the people of the plain do, they are one with us.
> QUESTION: And Kyala?
> KASITILE: He is there, Kyala and Lwembe are together among us and the people of the plain. It is Lwembe who creates twins. You do not. Who has made your body? Who has created you? Who has given you strength and breath so that you are born, and live, and grow up, and marry? It is Lwembe and Kyala together.[1]

[113] [1] cf. J. Buse, 'Die Zwillingsgeburt bei den Nyakyusa', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 73. Jahrgang, pp. 194ff.; 'Aus dem Leben von Asyukile Malango', *Zeitschrift für Eingeborenen-Sprachen*, Band xxxv (1950), p. 210.

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The shade is the principle of life represented by seed, or the root of a banana, or a tree growing by a grave;[1] the hero embodied a vital force which caused grain to sprout and clay cattle to breathe. The line between a hero, the shade of one of his successors, and the shade of a chief is a very faint one. They all have power over people other than their descendants and are approached by hereditary priests. As some elderly men of Ngonde put it: 'The nobles, not the living Kyungu, go to the groves of the Kyungus to pray; they go because the Kyungus who have died are shades to us all (*bo bayuka betu twesa*).'

The heroes had miraculous power but it differed in degree, rather than in kind, from that possessed by their descendants. Like that of the divine kings and chiefs it lay both in their own bodies and in medicines, especially the *ifingila* which is still used by chiefs.

Kyala and Lwembe dwell 'beneath' (*pasi*) with the shades, as opposed to 'above' (*kamuanya*), which implied traditionally 'on earth' not 'in the sky'. There is no hint of a sky god in the traditional system, and the distinction between black and white offerings, which the early missionaries took to be a distinction between offerings to the shades and to a sky god,[2] was unequivocally interpreted by the priests in another fashion. The white (*musolu*) offering to Kyala or Ngulube is a symbol not of purity, but of an unclouded sky, and the numinous quality of the heroes is conceived of as contamination, not holiness. Like the shades, the heroes must be 'driven off' lest men go mad, and it is when they have driven them away that men are *bolu*—white, innocent, free of anger. Men should be *bolu* but this is never cited as an attribute of the pagan Kyala. It is the terribleness, not the goodness or purity of God of which the Nyakyusa are aware. This is underlined by the fact that a madman who, 'when he comes home rushes off', and 'does not see that his fellows are human beings,' and who 'has a loose heart' (i.e. is passionate and quarrelsome), or 'whose heart curls up like a leaf in the sun, or turns upside down', is called 'Mbasi' or is said to have been 'caught hold of by Kyala'.

Kyala is one hero among others but, as has been shown, the name is *also* used in the sense of 'the lord'. Kyala as 'the lord' of a commoner or junior kinsman is distinct from Kyala the hero with his own place in a genealogy and his own shrine. The difference

[1] Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 103-7, 211 *et passim*.

[2] F. Fülleborn, *Das Deutsche Nyasa- und Ruwuma-Gebiet*, pp. 301-2.

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769 is illustrated in the references made by priests to the python which appears in Lwembe's grove as *kyala* (*vide supra*, pp. 29, 33). This python is 'the lord', Lwembe.

[776] [177] [773] Nowadays Kyala is spoken of as a first cause—the origin of death, and of social institutions, as well as the creator of life. The current version of the myth of the origin of death begins: 'When Kyala created the country and the people at the beginning there was no death. Then he thought there should be death and life. He asked people to choose between life and death, and they chose life.' And when men are asked the reason for a custom or ritual they may answer 'Kyala made us so', 'Kyala made us black people like that'.

Since Kyala is nowadays regarded as the creator of the natural order he is often blamed for the intractability of things—the log that splits, the lorry that skids. Once a vendor of very small potatoes said, when the buyer complained of the size, 'Kyala gave them to us like this', only to be jeered at by the onlookers who admonished him: 'Had you cultivated better they would have been larger.'

776 775 Much of the material quoted is susceptible of the interpretation that Kyala is an overriding power to which the shades, witches, and medicines are subject. 'The medicine will be effective if Kyala wills'; 'rain will fall when the rain-maker soaks his stones if Kyala wills'; 'when the doctor treats the tails they "vomit" (froth over), then if Kyala has helped us the cattle give much milk'. Even in 1935 conservatives like Kasitile sometimes expressed such beliefs, but they did not do so consistently. Their preoccupation was with other forces and acknowledgment of Kyala seemed to be tacked on almost as an afterthought. This came out very clearly in Kasitile's session with the diviner who, fearing the presence of a European, gave 'Kyala' as the cause of Kasitile's disease, and Kasitile rejected the verdict saying: 'Kyala never stands alone.'

[177] [771] The influence of Christian teaching on pagan thought was already considerable in 1935—Kasitile added 'Jesus' and 'the Holy Spirit' to the shades invoked—and we believe the mention of Kyala in many of the pagan prayers at that date to have been due to Christian influence. The idea of a supreme power is accepted very readily *as an addition* to the belief in the shades, the witches, and medicines, though it does not easily replace them altogether. By 1935 the shift in emphasis was clear. Besides Kyala 'the lord' of a commoner or junior, and Kyala the hero who is worshipped at

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769 782 Sacrifice is offered that a particular shade, or all the shades of the lineage, may be 'satisfied, assuaged'. The word used is *ukuhoboka* which is also used of a man who has been hungry and has eaten well of fine food, of a man who has married a bride who pleases him, and of a living father or father-in-law who has been angry but is now pacified. In its applicative form, *ukuhobokela*, means to forgive. And the act of sacrifice is an offering, a gift, to the shade strictly comparable to the gift a young man makes to his father when 'begging pardon' for some offence. A son who has committed the most heinous offence of all, seducing one of his [684] [783] father's wives, can 'beg pardon' only by offering a cow; but many smaller offerings are made by juniors to seniors to beg forgiveness for lesser offences.[1] When a cuckolded father receives his son he kills the cow brought to him and eats with his neighbours. It is held to be essential that the living who are insulted (and a man's neighbours are insulted with him) should share in the meat and express satisfaction.[2]

Other conceptions also are, however, manifest in sacrifices. At the offering to a recently dead chief the sacred cut of the meat is divided between the shade, whose portion is placed on the earth near his grave (ideally beside the stone set up at his marriage), and his young grandsons, who are identified with him. The conclusion that this is a communion between the living and the dead is inescapable. At a sacrifice to Lwembe it is certain of the hereditary priests, and they alone, who may share the sacred cut. At the sacrifices made by private persons the communion between shades and grandchildren is explicit when an offering of fish is made.[3] It is less clear in the sacrifice at a funeral, but is made plain [764] in the eating of grain or bananas with the *ikipiki* medicine which symbolizes the lineage. Then the shade is told 'all the food we have eaten you have eaten . . . farewell.' The communion of sacrifice is indeed but one manifestation of the identification of the participants in a ritual with the shades for, as has been shown in a previous book, the essential character of all the rituals of kinship is a death and rebirth, a death in which the participants—the kinsmen chiefly concerned—are made one with the shades and born anew,[4] and this theme is repeated in the ritual of the 'coming out'.

769 783 One paradox remains to be clarified. The shades must be

[1] *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 181-6. [2] *Good Company*, pp. 105, 140.
[3] *Rituals of Kinship*, p. 185. [4] *Ibid.*, pp. 203-5.

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assuaged and men should be *mwelu*, pure, innocent, without anger in their hearts. But, as has been shown, this quality of purity is the very *opposite* of spiritual power (*amanga* or *ubusisya*). It is attributed neither to Kyala and the other heroes nor to the priests; according to Kasitile (p. 138) a pure person cannot be a commoner priest and the chiefs themselves, though *mwelu*—pale—by comparison with the black commoners who are witches, are also 'heavy' (*nzito*) with the medicines they have drunk. Men become *mwelu* by confession; 'speaking out' is a condition of efficacy in sacrifice and the officiant blows out water as a symbol of bringing up all the anger that was in his heart. The parents of twins and the priests of Lubaga, having celebrated their awful rituals emerge, crying, '*Tuli belu*'—we are pure. The very quality which rituals produce in men is the *opposite* of that which characterizes their heroes, their priests, and their rulers. Galahad whose 'strength was as the strength often because his heart was pure' is wholly foreign to Nyakyusa thought.

Truthfulness was never mentioned as a characteristic of the righteous or the pure, nor is it a quality of the heroes or priests. Men censure one another for *ubutungulu* which is commonly translated as 'lying', but means rather 'speaking indiscreetly'. In one Nyakyusa text the child who is told certain ritual secrets by his father and reveals them when he should not is *ntungulu*, and this is an accepted use of the word. No burning concern with truth or falsehood is apparent in the Nyakyusa tradition though they are passionately interested in what they conceive to be right and wrong.

The conception of witchcraft and sorcery implies a freedom, a choice of good or evil, for the individual. Much is determined. In Nyakyusa thought, the sins of the fathers are visited on the children, and a child may fall ill because his great-grandfather shed blood or was bound with ropes, and was not adequately cleansed, or because his father has neglected a ward; moreover, kinsmen are 'members one of another', and a ritual neglected by one may bring suffering to others; but there is *also* the notion of individual responsibility. A witch or sorcerer acts consciously and voluntarily—our informants scouted the idea of a witch being unaware of his actions—and he may repent and desist. There are now, periodically in Africa, 'revivalist' movements in which a pagan doctor or diviner urges men to throw away their evil medicines and repent from their witchcraft. One such movement

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swept through BuNyakyusa in the early 1930's; perhaps other similar movements preceded it—we do not know. What is clear is that traditionally there was continuous public pressure to overcome hatred within the village and the kinship group; to rid oneself of it by confession and an expression of goodwill. In pagan thought Utopia is a society without witches or sorcerers and, though it was never achieved, everyone is convinced that formerly these evil-doers were fewer than now, because they were restrained by law, whereas 'witches' now go scot-free.

The interests of the Nyakyusa are personal and practical. Health, fertility, and amity between kinsmen and neighbours are what they seek. It is with rain and drought, with the rise of the Lake or the striking of lightning which destroys property; with stock, crops, and the wild animals which prey upon them that the myths are concerned. We could trace no tales of the sun, moon, and stars, and no rituals are directed to them. Reference is made to volcanic disturbance in the myths of the heroes—'the ground rumbled' when Nkekete and Kyala walked, and there are stories of small lakes disappearing and reappearing elsewhere—but the concern shown is surprisingly little if an eruption indeed destroyed villages last century as Mr. Harkin's single informant suggests (*vide supra*, p. 16).

Reality is thought to be revealed to men in dreams, by prophets who 'go down thinking like the roots of a tree' to the world of the shades, and by oracles. What men seek to know are the causes of misfortune—public and private—and the identity of witches. Occasionally, it is said, a prophet has looked into the future and foretold drought, or flood, or the coming of Europeans—'white things on the Lake'—against whom it would be foolish to fight, but for the most part they are concerned with the misfortunes that exist, and urging men to pray in the groves. The contemplative is not honoured in Nyakyusa tradition; the man of spiritual power is a detective—a discoverer of evil-doers—or an administrator whose awfulness adds to his authority.

Men are preoccupied with their relationships to other living men—their kinsmen, neighbours, and fellow office-holders—and with their dead fathers. They are not concerned with their relationship to Kyala. The rituals celebrated by kinsmen are directed to the shades not to any supreme God, and it is quarrelling between kinsmen that angers the shades and makes the celebration of certain rituals necessary. The communal rituals are

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We remarked to a Christian friend, a deacon, that the rains were late. He replied: 'Well, it is not so very unusual. Sometimes rains begin in one part of the country and not in another. Sometimes we do not get heavy rain down here until the end of January.' In short, the more educated Christians are beginning to think in more general terms: they do not as yet define probabilities statistically in terms of rainfall averages, but they are tending in that direction.

And what of the positive content of Christianity? The supreme attraction, mentioned again and again as the reason for conversion, is: 'There is life' (*ubumi bulipo*), and it is life in a world to come rather than 'more abundant life' here and now that is spoken of. The contrast is between heaven above and the shadowy world 'beneath' of pagan thought, or a fearful fiery hell in which most Christians believe and to which, some think, all pagans are condemned. Constantly in sermons by Nyakyusa preachers there was stress on life, resurrection, and on the rewards and punishments of the future life, and this theme recurs again and again in the dreams of Christians.

There is a gulf also between the pagan conception of 'driving off' the shades and the heroes lest by 'brooding over' a man they bring madness and death, and the Christian ideal of union with God. Sermons stress the goodness and love of God, characteristics quite foreign to the traditional picture of Kyala.

Something of the quality of Christian thought and feeling may be grasped by an examination of the names taken at baptism— the convert from paganism always chooses a new name for himself and the meaning is more immediately obvious to everyone than it is with modern English Christian names derived, as they mostly are, from languages no longer familiar. Many of the Nyakyusa names express a very direct personal relationship with God, the Redeemer: 'He has looked upon me', 'He has roused me', 'He has waited hoping for me', 'He has died for me', 'He gives me courage', 'He has changed me', 'He has chosen me out', 'He has comforted me', and a score more of the same type. Some refer to the Gospels: 'Word of Truth', 'The Word has taken hold of me'. A few speak of purification: 'Make me white', 'He has washed me'. Some express that union with God which the pagans so greatly fear: 'We are with him', 'He has come near', 'He has brooded over me', 'Let us approach', and some thanksgiving: 'Let us sing to Him', 'We praise Him', 'We have rejoiced', and some life: 'He is risen',

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Councils, the importance of establishing machinery for their appointment in chiefdoms where the 'coming out' is no longer held is obvious. [777] [622] [423]

The traditional communal rituals have not been dropped altogether, but their celebration is sporadic and not everyone supports them. Careful enquiries suggest that in less than half of the chiefdoms has the 'coming out' been celebrated when it was due. In the most conservative portion of the district, Selya, there were celebrations in 1952 and 1954, but even in that area a number of the ruling chiefs have never 'come out'. The omission is due partly to the desire of the old men to retain office, partly to the increase in population and the planting of coffee which makes any new deal in land unacceptable, and partly to the feeling of many that the old ritual is an anachronism, if not directly incompatible with their new faith in Christianity. Some chiefs who have not 'come out' would welcome a celebration; one such told us that 'if the "coming out" died chieftainship would die'; but a young chief's personal wishes are not decisive in this matter. Sacrifices at the groves of chiefs and heroes are not as frequent as before, but they still occur at some groves in time of drought or other emergency. The Kinga came to Lubaga in 1954, and they were expected to come and instal Kasitile's heir in 1955. In 1954 also there were sacrifices to Mwaijonga (82) and Mwakisambwe (30) for it was a season of scarcity. Rituals for cleansing the country and sprinkling the homesteads occur sporadically 'when occasion demands', but not annually in any chiefdom and never in some. And when celebrations do occur they do not unite the people of a chiefdom as they used to do. Christians oppose them and many non-Christians are also sceptical. [561] [796] [643] [782] [769] [771]

In 1935 the traditional rituals celebrated by lineages and chiefdoms formed a coherent system. They were directed towards the shades and the heroes, as was manifest in the sacrifices and in the dramas of death and rebirth when those secluded 'dwelt with the shades' or were 'caught hold of' by Kyala.[1] The older participants were then conscious, in greater or lesser degree, of the symbolism implicit in the actions they performed. By 1955 the ritual cycle was nowhere celebrated in full: what remained were 'bits and pieces' of ritual, none of them fully intelligible without reference to the complete cycle. The link between the rites and the shades and the heroes was less clear, and the symbolism less [769] [796]

[1] *Vide supra*, pp. 27-48, 70-85; *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 51, 98, 101, 111-13, 205.

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177 conscious. This disintegration of a former coherence, and a
● [769] decreasing awareness of the meaning of symbols used, are perhaps
[796] characteristic of changing societies in Africa.

Despite the growth of the Christian Church, the great demand for schools, and the dropping of the old rituals directed to family
[754] shades and the heroes, belief in the power of medicines flourishes.
[778] Probably most deaths and misfortunes are still attributed to an enemy using either witchcraft or sorcery. The traditional belief in witchcraft is rejected by educated people, but belief in the power of medicines is general. Autopsies still take place and occasionally the poison ordeal is administered in secrecy; one case was mentioned which occurred in 1942. As we have seen, medicines have always been regarded as a potential instrument of individual competition. They are used in the rituals of kinship to ensure health, fertility, and good manners and morals; in the ritual of chieftainship to buttress authority, and in 'sprinkling the homesteads' to fertilize the fields; but also by individuals to steal the fertility of their neighbours' fields and to grow rich at the expense of their neighbours, and it is their use as an instrument of individual aggrandisement that is most talked of today. There were many reports of their use by rivals to office as chiefs, and the floods of 1955, which washed away the Mbaka bridge and caused a serious landslide on that river, were interpreted as incidents in a
[578] prolonged fight between chiefs who were rivals for the position of paramount. The deaths of the heir of one of them in 1953, and of the other chief himself in 1956, were also attributed to their duel with medicines.

Along with the political changes there has been a development
797 of the Churches, more particularly of the Moravian Church,
795 which is now largely self-supporting, with growing congregations
177 served by African ministers.[1] Until 1938 the two main Protestant missions in Nyakyusa valley, the Moravian and Lutheran, were staffed by Germans and their funds came mainly from Germany. The war meant the withdrawal of the missionaries and the cutting off of funds. After a lapse of three years one Moravian missionary, and later one Lutheran, came to take charge of the missions and they were reinforced by other missionaries after the end of the war, but the whole policy in both missions is to build up self-supporting churches staffed by African pastors.

The work of the White Fathers mission was not interrupted by

[1] Change in Ngonde is not discussed.

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CHAPTER XIV

RELIGION AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

182 In this chapter we shall seek to show how the traditional communal rituals both reflect and maintain the traditional political structure, and to consider in what measure the change from paganism to Christianity compels a change in other aspects of the society, or, alternatively, how far the economic and political changes taking place among the Nyakyusa compel a change in religion.

182 773 769 643 The heroic myths are the charter for chieftainship. The heroes from whom the chiefs are descended are pictured as creators and benefactors, the authors of fertility and civilized living. But myth and ritual also entrench the rights of commoners and unify people of different stocks by asserting their complementary diversity. No ritual can be celebrated without the participation of commoner priests. They 'speak out' at rituals and bring public opinion directly to bear on the chief, whose own health is held to depend upon their goodwill; at the same time the whole country looks to the chief as the source of fertility in man and beast and field.

182 643 796 782 Ritual was the integrating force with the widest range in the traditional society. Independent chiefs, even those whose people were culturally as different as the Nyakyusa and Kinga, joined in sacrifice to Lwembe and Kyala and were mystically dependent upon one another. As Kasitile put it 'the Kinga come (to Lubaga) both when there is trouble in our land and in theirs'. In Ngonde the 'divine king', the Kyungu, who controlled a flourishing trade in ivory, developed secular as well as ritual functions and emerged as a paramount chief, but in the Nyakyusa valley the ritual bond had no secular backing save the exchange of iron and salt for food, which linked Kinga and Nyakyusa in a tenuous partnership. The sacrifices to the Lwembe did not exclude war between chiefs who acknowledged him, nor did sacrifice to their common ancestor exclude war between Mwaipopo (116) and Mwaihojo (147), but the necessity of co-operation in sacrifice compelled later reconciliation. Perhaps the insistence on the sacredness of the heroes and their living representatives, the elaborate ritual of

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chieftainship, and the dependence upon medicines as a means of enforcing law were connected with the ineffectiveness of secular authority. Certainly the Kyungu's emergence from seclusion, and the dropping of the taboos which surrounded him were connected with his acquisition of economic power; but we know too little of the conditions that make for elaboration of ritual to postulate any general connexion between the absence of ritual in public life and the effectiveness of secular authority.

The cycle of sacrifices to the heroes and dead chiefs among the Nyakyusa is more than an ancestor cult, for it includes non-relatives among its priests and beneficiaries; but it has many of the features of an ancestor cult, among them the identification of piety with conservatism. A good man follows exactly in the footsteps of his father who becomes his god. This is reconciled with a myth of a new beginning, ten generations ago, when civilized life came to the Nyakyusa valley, and the new beginning is celebrated each generation with the 'coming out' of the young chief and his contemporaries.

All Nyakyusa rituals are cathartic in the sense that they make explicit and seek to dissipate, by their very expression and rejection, certain anti-social tendencies. In the Nyakyusa view the root of evil is 'anger in the heart' unadmitted and corrosive, and only by an open confession can it be overcome.[1] Hence in every situation of misfortune, public or private, men are pressed to 'speak out' (*ukusoya*) and admit their anger. At the 'coming out' the conflict of generations is expressed in the prolonged debate over the date of the celebration and the detailed arrangements, and in the dancing and slaughter of cattle, and is finally resolved when authority and land are handed over to the young men by their fathers. The fissiparous tendencies of a chiefdom are made explicit and canalized in constitutional form by the division of the old chief's country into two, under his senior sons; and criticism of the young chiefs is made explicit in the formal admonition by the father's village headmen. The rejection of conflict is clearest at the annual purification when men throw out the ashes contaminated by family bickering and the cannibalism of witches, and *fight* one another 'that the homesteads may be peaceful'. This fighting is 'to bring out war from within (*ukusoya*)',

[1] cf. *Good Company*, pp. 99-112. The belief that a witch or sorcerer must confess if the patient was to recover was the reason for the torture of witches in many African societies.

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and is therefore to be interpreted as 'confession of anger', rather than as 'rebellion'.

Sometimes there is an expression of *opposite* tendencies, both implicitly approved. The sacrifices to the heroes and at the groves of the chiefs emphasize seniority and precedence, and express the dependence of junior on senior kinsmen, but the myth, recalled in every celebration, tells of the surpassing power of the son or younger brother in the beginning of time, and the junior brother of a chief often holds office as a priest. Then there is the drama of driving away the shade and bringing him back transformed, which is so characteristic of the rituals of kinship and appears again at the cleansing of the country. Such contradictions are doubtless expressions of ambivalent attitudes among the participants themselves, and of the attempt in ritual to reconcile conflicting social principles—in these instances authority with the rights and duties of juniors, and change with continuity.

In a society without written records legal certainty depends very largely on publicity. This is apparent in the law relating to marriage contracts and family inheritance,[1] and still more so in the law of the chiefdom. The ritual of 'coming out' celebrates radical changes in social status, and the public recognition of the leaders, members, and territorial boundaries of villages, as well as of the heirs to chieftainship. Thus certainty in these matters is assured. There is no positive value of the co-regency of father and son (as in ancient Egypt),[2] but the installation of the young chiefs before the death of their father serves to mitigate conflicts over the succession. Confusion over village boundaries and village leadership often appears when the ritual has not been celebrated, for there is no public definition to refer to.

How close is the link between religious belief and practice and social structure? There is no doubt that the sacrifices to the dead chiefs and heroes and the traditional rituals of kinship supported the former political and kinship structure of the Nyakyusa. Their performance compelled co-operation between kinsmen,[3] between neighbouring chiefs, and between chiefs and people. How far then does the change in religion, begun when the first Christian convert professed his new faith, compel a change in the social

[1] Godfrey Wilson, 'An Introduction to Nyakyusa Law', *Africa*, vol. iv, 1931, p. 69.
[2] H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp. 111–2.
[3] cf. *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 130–200, 203.

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structure? And how far does the new economic and political organization produce a change in religion? These theoretical questions can be answered only by a series of comparative studies. Here there is evidence for one area alone, and the conversions which we postulate can be established only if they hold in a whole range of societies.

Christianity implies an emergence from the nexus of kinship, for the worshipping group is two or three believers, not a body of kinsmen, and conversion is a personal choice. This is more obvious in a missionary church than in one long established, for, as we have seen, the convert in a pagan community must withdraw from his kinsfolk to become a Christian,[1] but it remains true, even in a Christian society. The new doctrine implies a body of believers—a Church. The particular form varies, but the Church has appeared wherever the Christian faith has been established. In short, we argue that the change in religion necessarily disrupts an organization based primarily on kinship and establishes a new type of organization based partly on voluntary association. With the change from the ritual of the lineage to the ritual of the Church the authority and leadership of senior kinsmen is diminished; they are replaced by 'elders' and priests or pastors whose basis of authority is not birth, but selection by the Church. Furthermore, association for worship becomes a pattern for association in other fields, and the Church is the training ground among the Nyakyusa, as it has been among so many other peoples, for organizers of other types of societies.

And not only is kinship subordinated to faith; the forms of kinship are themselves modified. From the time of their first arrival the missionaries have taught that Christianity implies monogamy and they have baptized no polygynist who does not put away his additional wives. This teaching has been questioned by many Africans and by some European missionaries themselves, who doubt the wisdom of persuading a man already married to send away his wives—or even of countenancing such an action. But the rule of monogamy has remained as a condition of membership in all the Churches with European connexions.[2] It has been rejected, as we have seen, by two of the 'independent' African

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 137-9.

[2] The rule was suspended for a brief period in one mission working not far from the Nyakyusa area, but was later enforced. cf. Lyndon Harries in *Survey of African Marriage and Family Life* (edited by A. Phillips), pp. 341-2.

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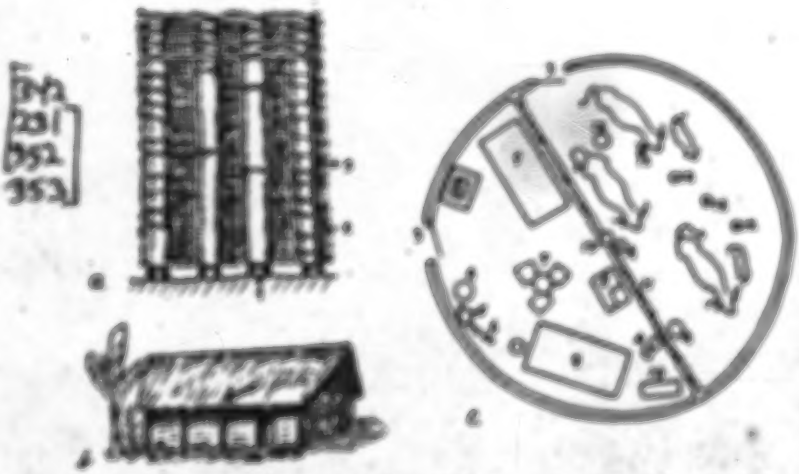
392 353 parts. The partition wall was bamboo and mud. A doorway gave on to the inner part, where Tuhome had her bed.

394 There were two hearths, one in each room. The front one was not used. In the outer room was a bed for guests—a common feature of all houses. Tuhome was thought to be well off, and she had plenty of carrying rings, used by the 402 women when they carry loads, often very heavy, on their heads. The inner room was used for stores, including a number of earthen jars. She had three very fine, 352 large mats. I saw them outside in the sun, but their usual place was no doubt in the outer room, which had the character of a workroom. Here were the large 402 wooden mortar and its long pestle; also the grinding stone and in a corner the small mat, the akyenye, which is used to take up the newly ground flour. There 417 was also the ladder, used for fetching down firewood from the loft; you could see 415 the hen's nest, and the large water jar with its painted bottom placed on three stones.

415 The third range belonged to an eighty-year-old woman whose husband had 709 died. She told me how every day she would fill a fine, decorated bamboo mug 671 with milk for him! These ranges, seen in all the houses, mostly have geometrical



Houses belonging to Mafo Ulenyakaya and her husband.

a. Detail of design, outer wall. c, two fore cross joined to bamboo pole—note aperture for liquid container; d, bamboo pole with plaited fibre windings; f, split bamboo—b, Mafo's dukagu—e. Plan of ranges. i, bed of the sons; n, iron stools for guests; p, door; q, posts supporting ceiling; s, fowl's nest; t, bars and posts for the water-carrier; v, hearth; w, stools; y, bed of the grandchildren; zz, mats from hollowed out reeds; rr, low partition; ss, posts for tying cattle; cg, crosse pole to top of roof.

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4. A visit to the chief's father's grave was paid in company with the chief and some of his *omafumu*. It was situated in a banana grove (*ilingoto*[1]) not very remote from the chief's hut. The grave of the present chief's father was on the ground-floor, about one hundred paces from its edge and was characterized by a small sizedged basalt block about half a metre in height[2] and about forty centimetres in breadth. An indola-plant was also standing on the grave about one metre from the basalt block.

On this occasion the chief also told me of the special cases for which sacrifices are offered in this grove. These are performed only in cases of very serious accidents, sickness or famine which may overcome the chieftainship. In such cases a black cow is slaughtered after sunset at the edge of the grove. In the presence of the chief some pieces of meat of the slaughtered beast, together with some bananas, are laid down at the grave. The chief adds a prayer to his ancestors at some distance from the grave, referring to the evil by which the chieftainship or some special village of it has been afflicted. He enumerates all the names of his ancestors and asks them for their help.

The remaining pieces of the meat and other bananas are left in the grove during the night. When the next day dawns, the *omafumu* return and some *abawegago* divide the meat and eat it together. On this occasion the chief orders the removal of all remains of ashes from the huts. The ashes are thrown down in such unclean places as where leprous persons had been buried. After this has been done, the chief in conjunction with an *uwegago*[3] produces a new fire for the huts by twirling, and all other fires of the village, or villages, must be kindled anew from this "novel-fire".

5. The reason for visiting an *undaguzi* (diviner)[4] who dwelled in Ilongo an older age-set village[5] which seemed to the visitor to be a more ancient part of Katumba, was caused by the sickness of the chief's sister. In accordance with the custom of the Nyakyusa in bringing women back to their father's village if they are very sick, the

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[1] Cf. Johnston, *Statistics*, pl. *amasiata*, p. 430; Mackenzie, *ilingoto*, burial place, p. 388; *mangoto*, graves of the dead chiefs, p. 151; Wilson, Introduction, p. 397, *ilingoto*, sacred grove; Merensky, p. 115.

[2] Cf. Pöllabauer, p. 327.

[3] Cf. n. 5, p. 5.

[4] Cf. Johnston, p. 451.

[5] I proposed to call the special form of villages found within the Nyakyusa society, which are erected on the age-set principle, „age-set villages" (African Studies, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 15—16 June 1943), a terminology that does not alter G. Wilsons statements on the "Age Villages" (Introduction, p. 399 ff).

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ancestors and of Kyala[17]. At the same time he moved his curved wood to and fro on the ground and when he did so, it indicated a negative answer from the beings invoked. But when he was asked: "Is the guilt for the sickness to be found in the husband of the chief's sister?", he was unable to move his wood as before; he could only stamp it on the ground, and this meant an affirmative reaction of the invoked spirits. Now, therefore, the meeting had reached its aim.

I asked the diviner to tell me how he had acquired his faculty. He explained that (besides the necessary inner disposition) the payment of a fee for the medical preparation was necessary in order to become a diviner[18]. This outfit consisted in a special vaccination by a learned diviner. For this purpose the neophyte was incised by his master on different spots on the upper side of the knuckles, and in these small incisions was rubbed a medical powder. By these means the initiate may be inspired by the prophesying spirits. These influences are then felt by the diviner as a power which directs the movements of his hand in the manner described.

6. Near the hut of the chief's principal wife was a "sacred" banana plant, in the grove opposite to the chief's hut and in the grove with the grave of the chief's father already described. At particular times, when any need demands it, the chief offers a prayer in this place to his ancestors[19]. The sickness of his sister, for instance, was such an occasion for him to address the ancestors. I was invited by the chief to witness this act; but I raised objections, telling him that my presence might perhaps rather cause the anger than the help of his ancestors. In reality, I did not want the chief to stage a theatrical act on my behalf. But the chief rejected my excuses and explained that he would act in the same manner as if I were not present, because he had made up his mind to this prayer. The chief was assisted during this ceremony by Mwainyekule who presented to the chief a calabash of water as he arrived at the banana plant devoted to this purpose. The chief took [illegible] Then he recited the names of his ancestors and begged them to help his sister.

7. During one afternoon, I was told that a ceremony to end the initiation of a (betrothed) girl was going on in a family of the village.

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[17] name of the supreme spiritual being.
[18] Cf. Mackenzie, p. 238.
[19] Mackenzie refers that such a place is named "ikiyinja", "the family place of prayer" (pp. 144, 197), but without indication of the locality, as Kawonga.